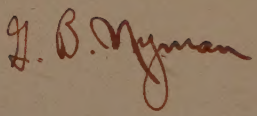
OUR NEW TESTAMENT

HOW DID WE GET IT?

HENRY C. VEDDER



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Our New Testament

Our New Testament

How Did We Get It?

By

Henry C. Vedder

Professor of Church History
in
Crozer Theological Seminary

Philadelphia
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TO

Milton G. Evans, D. D.

MY COLLEAGUE IN THE SEMINARY AND IN
THE STUDY OF THE WORD

PREFACE

THIS book has been described in advance, by some of the author's friends, as an answer to "The Formation of the New Testament," by Dr. George H. Ferris. Since it professes to be a historical investigation, and not a work of apologetics or polemics, it can be an answer to any other book only in the sense that it reaches a totally different conclusion, as the result of the inquiry. In a few cases only, where it seemed to be erroneous in the statement of some material fact, or in the drawing of some important inference, has the book of Doctor Ferris been singled out for comment. In this respect it has been treated no differently from the writings of Harnack and Jülicher, and even Westcott and Gregory, each of whom has sometimes erred in fact or in inference, as has been duly pointed out. For his own errors, the author bespeaks the friendly and candid severity of every reader. And he would repeat what he has said on another occasion: "Only by repeated investigation, and as frequent comparison of conclusions, can the facts and their interpretation be ultimately established. It is glory enough for any of us to have contributed even one small stone to the temple of truth."

CROZER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, September 1, 1908.

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I

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

I

WHEN at the Leipzig Disputation of 1519, the turning-point of the Reformation, Doctor Eck, of Ingolstadt, the champion of the Roman Church, asserted the supreme authority of the pope in matters of doctrine, Luther retorted that not the pope but the Scriptures are the supreme authority. "Neither is it in the power of the Roman pontiff to frame new articles of faith," said Luther, "but only to judge according to those already framed. Nor can any faithful Christian be compelled to anything beyond the Holy Scriptures, which constitute, properly speaking, the divine law, unless a new and approved revelation be added. Aye, by divine law we are forbidden believing anything except what is proved either from Scripture or by manifest revelation." At the time Luther uttered these words, he still believed himself to be a loyal member of the Roman Catholic Church, but he had unconsciously announced the formal principle of Protestantism.

As the Reformation progressed, the importance

of this principle was more and more clearly recognized, until Chillingworth gave it that epigrammatic form which has since had so wide circulation, "The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." A more carefully defined statement of the same idea found a prominent place in the Westminster Confession: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." This was inserted without change in the Savoy Declaration of the Congregational churches, in 1658, and in the Confession of the English Baptists, of 1688, widely known in the United States as the Philadelphia Confession. Since statements identical in substance are contained in all Protestant Confessions, this may be taken as the common standard of orthodoxy to this day.

This assertion of the supreme authority of the Scriptures has always been believed to permit a reasonable liberty of opinion concerning the doc-

trine of their inspiration. Neither the nature, the method, nor the extent of inspiration is defined in any Articles of Faith set forth by a Protestant or evangelical body; and while on the whole a "high" doctrine of inspiration has been regarded as more correct, or at least as "safer," any doctrine has been tolerated (though with some reluctance at times) that did not seriously impair the religious authority of the Bible. Even the vexed question of errancy or inerrancy in the Scriptures has never been authoritatively determined in any creed, or been made a test of fellowship in any denomination. The suggestion of errors in the Scriptures has undoubtedly been looked upon with much disfavor, and those who maintain that errors exist have often been called heretical; but this has been the opprobrious language of opponents in controversy, not the well-considered condemnation of a recognized ecclesiastical tribunal.

Until quite recently it has not been clearly perceived that there is a question lying back of that which has hitherto absorbed attention—a fundamental question, a question therefore of the first importance and of compelling interest. Before we can ask, What is the authority of Scripture?

or, at any rate, before we can answer the question, we must ask and answer the deeper question, What is Scripture? The Reformers [1] did not feel the full stress of this prior question because, in their contest with the Romanists, both parties recognized the same New Testament, both alike admitted its authority. The exact point of difference then was, Has tradition equal authority with Scripture, and must we accept teachings of the Fathers and decisions of Councils that rest on tradition, not on the Scriptures? On this issue the Reformation battle was fought.

Luther was the only one among the Reformers to appreciate the importance of the question, What is Scripture? But Luther raised this question, not so much because of its fundamental importance, as because he found it difficult to reconcile his doctrine of justification by faith *alone* with the Epistle of James, which seemed to him to teach justification by faith *and works*. Instead of seeking a better exegesis of both Paul and James, which would have shown their essential

[1] We are speaking, be it remembered, of the New Testament exclusively. The Reformers did raise the question, What is Scripture? with regard to the Old Testament, and the result of the ensuing controversy in the Reformation period was the rejection as apocryphal of the Greek books that since the version of Jerome had been accepted in the Catholic Church as Scripture.

harmony, he too easily accepted the theory of an irreconcilable conflict between them, and for himself rejected James altogether, calling it an epistle of straw (*ein recht strohren Epistel*). Having begun thus by excluding one book of the New Testament, he went on to reject others, notably the Apocalypse. But while, for his private use and edification, Luther thus reconstructed the New Testament according to his notions of what it should be, he did not subject all the writings to critical scrutiny, and he laid down no principle by which another could certainly determine whether a given book should be in our New Testament or not. The other Reformers treated these ideas of Luther as mere vagary or eccentricity, and let them go at that.

But we cannot to-day pass by indifferently or wave aside as of no practical consequence this fundamental question, What is Scripture? Circumstances have forced it on our attention and compel its serious consideration. The scholarship of the age is much occupied with it, and even the plain people wish to know what scholars are thinking and saying among themselves about the Bible. Then too, the Reformation polemics are not the polemics of to-day. We used to say to

the Romanist, "We cannot accept the authority of the Church; we stand upon the teaching of the New Testament." And having said this, we flattered ourselves that we had settled the matter. But we are now somewhat dismayed to find that when we have said this, the discussion, so far from being ended, is only begun. For the Romanist at once retorts, "The Church existed before the New Testament; the Church gave you the New Testament and guarantees its authority; in accepting the New Testament you accept the authority of the Church, and every time you appeal to Scripture you logically appeal to that Church which gave it to you." And some of our own scholars are assuring us that the Church of Rome is historically justified in her contention; that she did give Christendom the New Testament, and guaranteed its authenticity and authority; that it is the historic fact that Rome made the Canon, and therefore the validity of the Canon is just as great as the authority of Rome, and no greater.

If this is true, then, humiliating as the confession may be, it must be acknowledged that Protestants have been wrong from the beginning. In appealing from the authority of Rome to the

Scriptures they were making a false issue—in the very appeal they unwittingly acknowledged the authority that they intended to repudiate. Shall we deny the right of Rome to declare what is the true interpretation of a passage of Scripture, and admit her right to decide for us the whole question of what is Scripture? That is not merely illogical, it is suicidal. If it is historic truth that Rome made the Canon, the Protestant claims are completely undermined. To accept Rome's authority in the fundamental question, What is Scripture? and then cavil about her authority to answer, What does Scripture mean? is surely to strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.

Nevertheless, if it is the historic fact that Rome made the New Testament Canon, and Protestants have in reality accepted it on her sole authority, the fact must be acknowledged and the consequences must be faced. We must before all things receive the truth and follow whither she leads. No respect for Protestant tradition, no pride of consistency, no reluctance to confess a long-upheld error, shall prevent us from the hearty and loyal acceptance of the truth. That is what we daily pray the Holy Spirit to teach us,

that is what we love and honor, to that we will, like the fathers whom we revere, be faithful even unto death. But—is this the truth? Aye, there's the rub! The question must receive more careful consideration than has been given to it by the Protestant world before men are ready to answer.

What is Scripture? is therefore the question of questions to-day. The answer that has been given for generations no longer answers. It is not enough to say, The New Testament, for at once the further question arises and will not down, Where and how did we get our New Testament? And this question must be answered. If no satisfactory reply is forthcoming, many will soon find their confidence in the authority of the New Testament seriously impaired.

It was once a common opinion—of course only among the ill-informed—that the New Testament had always existed as we now know it, one book. There was a time when any attempt to amend the text, even of the English version, was thought by very good people to be incurring the evils denounced by the Revelator on any who should add to or take from "the words of the prophecy of this book"—"this book" meaning to the ignorant reader the whole Bible in his hands, from the

first verse of Genesis to the final word of Revelation. That time has happily passed. The Sunday-school has made Christian people familiar with some cardinal facts about the Bible. The least scholarly among us no longer supposes that the New Testament existed as a collected body of writings in the days of the apostles. The most ignorant among us now knows that these twenty-seven writings that we call the New Testament were composed in different places, at different times, for different purposes, by many different writers; that a period of probably forty or fifty years intervened between the first writing and the last; and that subsequently these scattered writings were gathered into one collection. So much is generally known. But When? and How? and Where? As to that the average Christian has hitherto known little, but he is beginning to concern himself much.

It has also become generally known that these twenty-seven books which compose our New Testament were not the entire literature of the early years of Christianity—perhaps not all the literature of the apostolic age even. It is known that doubts were expressed in early times regarding the genuineness and authority of some of the

books in our New Testament. These things are in the air; they are found in the newspapers and periodicals that our plain people are reading. This knowledge causes, not exactly doubt, but perplexity. People would like to know something more about this early Christian literature, something about the reasons why part of it was admitted into the New Testament, while part of it was not. In short, they are curious to know how and why it came about that just these books, and no others, were accepted as the Christian Scriptures.

The list of books that compose our New Testament is called the Canon, and the process of gathering the books into a collection is called the formation of the Canon. The word is much used, but seldom defined, and this fact often leads to confusion. Nothing is so efficient a preventive of crude thinking, or so certain a protection against misunderstanding, as a precise definition. "Canon" is a word that is properly defined by its history. It is used several times in the Pauline Epistles in its ordinary sense of a rule or standard (2 Cor. 10 : 13, 15, 16; Gal. 6 : 16). When the Christian writers of a later time begin to speak of the "canonical" Scriptures, they

mean those writings that had been accepted as the rule, norm, standard of the Christian faith. The alternative and earlier phrase is, "the canonized Scriptures"; and both phrases describe a definite collection of writings, approved as an authoritative rule.

We may still further define, by distinguishing the idea of the Canon from certain related ideas. Canonicity means simply the fact of recognition as one of the books of this authoritative collection. A book may have all the other qualities of books that belong to the Canon and yet lack canonicity. For example, the Epistle of James could not be said to possess canonicity until the fourth century. Long before that it was conceded by a large part of the Church to be inspired, but as its addition to the collection was not yet generally recognized, it was not canonical. A book may have recognized value, to a high degree, and not be canonical, as was the case with the Shepherd for a long time. A book may have a notable history, and close relations with canonical books, and not be canonical, like the gospel of Nicodemus. A book may have become canonical in spite of the fact that its origin and early history are unknown, as did the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The history of the Canon is therefore something quite different from the history of the books of the New Testament. Each book has an interesting history, but when the facts concerning each separate book have been learned and all are brought together, we have at best only materials for the history of the Canon. The history of the Canon, then, is the tracing of the process by which there grew up a well-defined collection of books that came to be accepted throughout the Christian churches, East and West, as the rule of Christian faith and of Christian life.

We have defined the Canon as the collection of writings approved as the authoritative rule of Christian faith. Approved by whom? Approved when? Approved how? These are the crucial questions, and when we have found a satisfactory answer to them we shall know all that is essential about the formation of the Canon. By a "satisfactory" answer is meant, not an answer that satisfies tradition, or prejudice, or a pet theory, but an answer that *exactly accords with all the known facts*. The questions at issue must be decided by fact, and sound reasoning based on facts, not by authority or appeals to passion.

"All the known facts!" We must carefully investigate and discover what they are; we must bravely and candidly face them when found. We have nothing to fear from such inquiry; it is not truth that is dangerous, but falsehood. If the Bible is what we hold it to be, the word of God, it will bear the most searching examination, and emerge from the test with a triumphant vindication of its claim. No inquiry about the Scriptures should be deprecated or feared, provided it is fair in spirit, thorough in its search for the whole truth, and impartial in its weighing of evidence. Truth is the only object worthy of a scholar's pursuit, as it is the only attainment capable of satisfying a rational mind. In any case, inquiry is inevitable; to object to it is futile, to oppose it is both foolish and dangerous. For by opposing fair inquiry we make a humiliating confession of the weakness of our cause, our secret dread lest scrutiny of the nature and authority of Scripture should result in discrediting it. We should remember that, in the long run, nothing can be discredited but that which is unworthy of credit.

A few words may be properly added on the method to be pursued in this inquiry. This is

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an inductive study, but the deductive method cannot be wholly excluded. It will even seem to some readers that too large a place is occupied in some of the following chapters by deductions from assumed facts and principles. The same thing will be found to be true of all books on the history of the Canon, for it is a necessity of the case. Our information regarding the beginnings of the Christian churches, and of Christian institutions, from the days of the apostles to the close of the second century, is very fragmentary and incomplete. The surviving literature is scanty, and what remains is not a literature of fact. We are obliged to glean painfully, from several thousand pages of patristic writing, a few bits of knowledge, piece these together as best we may, and bridge over the yawning chasms between them with the most plausible conjectures that we can supply. The chief difference between writers on the Canon will be found to consist in the degree of caution, the sobriety of judgment, with which this absolutely necessary work is done. It is perfectly legitimate, therefore, for the adequate interpretation of our incomplete facts, to ask ourselves, What might we fairly expect *a priori* would occur in certain circum-

stances, given a known point of departure and the ordinary workings of human nature? If in such cases, the few facts that we possess agree exactly with our deductions, we may rest in a tolerably safe conclusion. But ordinarily, we shall proceed by induction from the facts established by competent testimony.

Hypothesis is a useful factor in all scientific inquiry; the inductive method cannot be practically applied without its aid. The imagination has also its indispensable use in historical investigation. Both, however, should be kept under rigorous control, as implements of investigation, and by no means should either be suffered to dominate the inquiry. Every hypothesis regarding the Canon should be subjected to three tests: first, is it rational and credible *per se?* secondly, does it take into account all the known facts? thirdly, does it offer an adequate explanation of all the facts? A hypothesis that successfully endures these three tests is entitled to acceptance as probably true—the degree of probability varying with the nature of the facts, and sometimes amounting to a moral certainty. But just as the chauffeur who has been driving his automobile at a speed that seems to annihilate distance has found his powerful machine

brought to a sudden standstill by a little nail that has punctured his tire, so many a hypothesis that seemed to sweep everything before it in triumph has been ignominiously wrecked by a single hard fact.

One other word about the method of the book. An attempt has been made in good faith to give every material testimony in the writings of the Fathers, not in paraphrase or summary, but in the writer's own words, together with a reference to the source of the quotation. This has been done, even when it involved somewhat extended quotation, and a consequent interruption in the course of the narrative. It is believed that no relevant passage of any importance has been omitted; certainly none has been omitted because of any difficulties that it presented. As a result, the reader will have in his possession, when he has finished reading this book, the original materials for the history of the Canon, not the present history merely. He will be in a position to judge whether the author has treated the materials fairly, and whether the conclusions drawn from them in the book are justified. The longer sources are gathered in the Appendix, and only brief quotations from them are made in the

text. This is a guarantee of fairness that every author ought willingly to give, and that all readers and students may at all times be trusted to appreciate.

There are other books that have for their purpose the telling of the story of the Canon, but most of them are written for scholars, not for plain people; and, if they were comprehensible by a plain man, they are so voluminous that the very sight of them frightens him away. To tell this story within reasonable limits, and so that the average man can easily understand it, and yet tell all that needs to be told; to tell the story with an accuracy that will deserve the approval of scholars, yet with an element of interest that will gain the attention of busy men, is the purpose of this book. It is an ambitious attempt; it may easily fail of success.

To determine when and where we got our Canon does not completely answer the question, What is Scripture? It will tell why certain books, and those only, came to be accepted as Scripture, and so far will give us grounds to decide why we should accept them as Scripture. Hence nobody need expect—or fear—to find discussed in these pages the inspiration, the authen-

ticity, and the authority of the Scriptures, except so far as their authority is necessarily connected with the history of the Canon. The discussion will be strictly limited by the title of the book.

II

THE IDEA OF THE APOSTOLIC WRITINGS AS "SCRIPTURE"

II

EVERY reader of the New Testament is familiar with the fact that the collection of books known to us as the Old Testament is described by the apostolic writers as Scripture. This word is used in a technical sense, implying a special character of sacredness and authority in these writings. It was generally believed, among Jews and Christians alike, that this special character of the Scriptures was due to the fact that their writers "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1 : 21). The reading of these Scriptures, and the explaining of them to the people, formed a regular part of the Sabbath services in the Jewish synagogues.

This was, in truth, the most important part of the service. The synagogue, unknown when the canonical books of the Old Testament were written, arose after the exile in response to the need for the instruction of the Israelites in the law. This was the primary function of the synagogue, and worship was secondary. Josephus makes this plain when he says: "Not once

or twice or more frequently did our lawgiver command us to hear the law, but to come together weekly, with the cessation of other work, to hear the law and to learn it accurately" (Apion ii. 7). Indeed, the Old Testament itself gives a precedent for such instruction, in the gathering of the people after the return from captivity and the reading of the law to them by Ezra and others. "And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8 : 8). In the New Testament we find plainly recognized this teaching of the law as the main function of the synagogue, and Jesus constantly availed himself of this opportunity for instructing the people during his ministry in Galilee.[1] The reading of the law, and later of the prophets also, and instruction based on such reading, was the chief thing for which the synagogue existed, and wherever the Jews were there was a synagogue: "For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath" (Acts 15 : 21).

When the disciples of Christ began to preach

[1] **Matt. 4 : 23; Mark 1 : 21; Luke 4 : 15, 31; 6 : 6; 13 : 10; John 6 : 59; 18 : 20.**

the glad tidings of salvation through him, they began in the synagogues. They made the law and the prophets the basis of their teaching, for these testified of the Messiah whom they proclaimed. The first preaching was wholly like that of Jesus to the two disciples whom he met on the way to Emmaus when, "beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24 : 27). The appeal was to the written word of the Old Testament, and it is recorded as the result of apostolic preaching at Berœa that the Jews there were "examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so" (Acts 17 : 11).

When the disciples thus made began to gather themselves into assemblies of their own, and the Christian churches became clearly differentiated from the Jewish synagogues, it was only what we ought to expect, in view of the Jewish training of most of them, that they should continue the methods of the synagogue, and particularly this custom of the public reading and exposition of the Scriptures. The "reading" to which Timothy was exhorted to give heed (1 Tim. 4 : 13) was without doubt the public reading of the law

and prophets. That the Psalms were early used in Christian worship, probably being sung antiphonally (Eph. 5 : 19), as they were intended to be used, is plain from several allusions in Paul's epistles (Col. 3 : 16; *cf.* Mark 14 : 26; Matt. 26 : 30). Since they believed that these Scriptures testified of their Lord, it was inevitable that all writers of the apostolic age should continually appeal to the Old Testament as authoritative—in every dispute, a passage of Scripture was final for confirmation. And accordingly, wherever we find the Scriptures mentioned in the New Testament, and in the literature of the sub-apostolic age, we are to understand the law and the prophets. The word "Scripture" is never applied to their own writings by the Christian writers of the first century. They did not place their own writings on an equality with the law and the prophets, nor claim for them an equal authority.

That is to say, no such formal claim was made. But the Apostle Paul did virtually claim such authority in his letters to the churches, especially to the Corinthians, when he distinctly says, "I think I have also the Spirit of God," and at one time says of his counsels, "not I, but the Lord,"

while at another he is scrupulous to say, "I, not the Lord" (1 Cor. 7 : 40, 10, 12). And no writer could claim the highest authority as the prophet of God in more impressive words than are used at the close of the Revelation: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." And if none of the other writers of the first century is quite so emphatic in the assertion of his authority to speak for God, that claim is implicit in such writings as the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistles of James and Peter. We find in them the same tone that so impressed the Jews in the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 7:28, 29): "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." The disciples of Christ caught something of his manner and method, as we feel when we read their writings.

It is often said that the churches read the

Epistles of Paul in their public worship long before they regarded them as Scripture; but can that assertion be made good? It is a fact of record, to be sure, that we find mention of the reading earlier than an explicit assertion that the epistles are Scripture, but that is a very uncertain ground for an inference of so grave a character. No Father tells us all that he knew or thought, and that facts are found in a certain order in patristic literature by no means invariably proves that things happened in that precise order. May we not go further and say that, in all probability, the exact reverse of the above inference is true—that the idea of the scriptural authority of the epistles preceded their customary public reading? For the apostles spoke as ambassadors, the representatives of Christ, as well as the witnesses of his resurrection. Whatever authority Christ himself had, he was supposed by the churches to have deputed to the apostles. The claim to be directed by the Spirit of Christ is implicit in all the apostolic writings.

Nothing less than this can account for or justify their tone of spiritual, not official, authority. Paul does not write like a Catholic bishop, as Athanasius or Augustine wrote to the churches in

their jurisdiction, or even as Cyprian wrote. His tone is different even from that of Ignatius. He writes, not as a bishop, but as an apostle. And from the first the churches must have received his letters as he wrote them, recognizing in them the voice of Christ. The churches continued the use of the Old Testament from habit; they read the apostolic writings because in them they heard the voice of their Master, their supreme authority, speaking through the writer. And so soon as it occurred to them to ask which were the more authoritative, the law and the prophets, or the Gospels and Epistles, they promptly gave the first place to the latter, though still retaining the former because of their testimony to Christ.

The exceptional character of the Gospels and Epistles of Paul we find distinctly recognized in the earliest Christian literature, outside of the Canon; and a considerable part, if not the whole, of those writings that were finally canonized were from the first regarded as standing in a class by themselves. We do not find them always formally quoted by the earliest Christian writers, nor appealed to as an authority equal to the Old Testament, as came to be the later usage, but we find evidence of a certain familiarity with their con-

tents that colors all the thought and expression of the early Fathers.

Clement of Rome illustrates this condition of things perfectly. As bishop of the church of Rome—and his letter shows that "bishop" was, in his time, no more and no other than "presbyter"—he writes a letter to the church at Corinth. The Corinthians, we gather from the letter, had been treating their presbyters with scant respect, and had even deposed some of them from office without good cause. Clement remonstrates with them, and exhorts them to a more Christian course of conduct. Twice he quotes from "the words of the Lord Jesus." The first quotation is: "Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive that it may be forgiven to you; as ye do, so shall it be done unto you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure ye mete, with the same it shall be measured to you" (chap. 13). The second quotation is: "Woe to that man! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hung about his

A. D. 97

neck and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones" (chap. 46).

The first quotation is substantially identical with Matt. 5:7; 6:12-15; 7:2, and Luke 6:36-38, but it is not verbally identical with either. The second passage corresponds in the main to Matt. 18:6; 26:24; Mark 9:42, and Luke 17:2, but it is not an exact quotation of any passage in our present Gospels. There are several possible explanations of these discrepancies. Clement may not have had before him the text of the Gospels; he may have quoted from memory,[1] being satisfied to give the general sense of the words of Jesus. Or, he may have had a different text from any that has survived. Or, again, he may have had a different collection of the sayings of our Lord from either of the canonical Gospels. For our present purpose, it is not important to choose between these possible explanations; in any event, he was quoting "the words of the Lord Jesus" as final authority, which is all that it concerns us just now to know.

[1] A recent popular novel, in its concluding paragraph, shows how trusting to memory leads to curious metamorphoses of the text: "Maxwell . . . quoted a text from the Scripture in a low voice—'she suffered much, so much shall be forgiven of her!'" The writer doubtless supposed that he was citing accurately Luke 7 : 47.

As to the Epistles, Clement makes distinct reference to Paul's letters to the Corinthian church, and repeatedly quotes from them and paraphrases them. Chap. 49 of his letter is a plain imitation of 1 Cor. 13. He is thoroughly familiar with the Epistle to the Hebrews; he quotes 1 : 2, 3 accurately, and borrows many brief phrases to adorn his sentences. He knows the Epistle to Titus, to the Ephesians, and the first to Timothy. And this sentence, though not an exact quotation, could never have been written save by a careful student of Romans: "And we too, being called by his will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works that we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (chap. 32; *cf.* Rom. 3 : 20, 28, etc.). Nor could this well have come from one who had not carefully read the First Epistle of John—"The blood of Jesus Christ gained for the whole world the offer of the grace of repentance" (chap. 8; *cf.* 1 John 1 : 7; 2 : 20).

Clement's use of the apostolic writings shows

that he put them in a class by themselves, but he seldom quotes from them with the exact verbal accuracy deemed essential in our times. Rather, his letter is full of echoes of Gospels and Epistles, which testify eloquently to the care with which he had studied them, and the honor in which he held them. This is exceedingly significant, as Clement wrote about A. D. 97, say about the time of the composition of the Apocalypse and perhaps a decade before the Gospel of John was written. That the writings later held to be canonical were already so highly esteemed, is a fact that many writers have passed over too lightly. It is true that Clement never cites the apostolic writings as Scripture, with the formula that he uses for the Old Testament, " it is written," or " it says," but he does not seem to have esteemed their authority as really less than that of the law and the prophets. The words of the Lord Jesus, in particular, he regards as the highest possible authority.

We must remember, in estimating the significance of Clement's use of the New Testament writings—and this remark applies equally to all the early Fathers—that he did not write for the purpose of telling us which of these books he had

and valued, and that he probably had no need to tell his contemporaries. What we learn from him is purely incidental information, and we have no right to assume that he tells us all that he knew. Inferences of the most positive nature are often drawn from the silence of a Father, which accurate reasoning must repudiate. If a Father quotes from a book, that proves his acquaintance with it. But if he fails to quote from another book, that usually proves nothing. Only in a rare case are we entitled to infer that silence is equivalent to ignorance. When a later Father, like Basil, besprinkles his pages with quotations from every other canonical book, and omits all mention of the Apocalypse, that omission may no doubt be taken to be significant. It cannot prove ignorance, in his case, but it may be equivalent to denial of the canonicity of the book.

The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, which the majority of scholars now assign to the year 100 or earlier, shows a considerable advance in accuracy of quotation. Many verses are cited from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with almost exact verbal accuracy. The variations are so slight, in most cases, that the same English sentence will accurately translate both

forms. In many other cases, there is substantial correctness of quotation, and a large number of brief phrases are identical with our present Greek text of those Gospels, A. D. 100 such as, "bless those that curse you," and "give not that which is holy unto dogs." Although a number of ingenious theories have been advanced to explain the discrepancies in these quotations, it is morally certain that the compiler (or compilers) of this document had before him (or them) our canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The variations from the text of the evangelists are not difficult of explanation, but the correspondences with our present text seem inexplicable on any other hypothesis. For it is evident that when one writer cites accurately the words of another, he must have been acquainted with them; while a slovenly quotation may be the result, not of ignorance, but of carelessness.

There are also in the Didache certain significant echoes of the Gospel of John, which was probably written at about the same time. Such phrases as "Holy Father," used in prayer to God (and found only in John 17 : 11); "the vine," applied to Christ, and used only in John 15 : 1-8; and "perfect her [*i. e.*, the church] in

thy love," a phrase found only in 1 John 4: 17—though scarcely quotations in the technical sense, could hardly have been used by a writer who was not familiar with the ideas and diction peculiar to John.

What for our present inquiry is most significant is that the words of Jesus, the instruction of the apostles, and the Old Testament are cited freely as occasion demands, as if they were of equal authority, and alike demanded the faith and obedience of all Christians. The word "Scripture," or the formula "it is written" is used in neither case. Authority is assumed for the words cited, but not formally asserted. Among the readers addressed there was nobody at all likely to question the authority of any of these words.

We find the same phenomena in the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp. There is no occasion to plunge here into the interminable controversy that has been waged over the genuineness of the Ignatian letters. Scholars are now pretty well agreed in accepting the shorter Greek recension of seven letters as probably genuine. If not written by Ignatius himself, they must have been fabricated soon after his death. For our present

purpose it matters little who was their author, since in any event they must have been written in the first half of the second century, and they are a valid witness to the way in which Christians of that time looked at the writings of the apostles. If they were written by Ignatius himself, their date cannot well be later than 120, since his martyrdom cannot with good reason be placed later than that. Indeed, the only tradition about his death is that he suffered in the reign of Trajan, who died in 117.

A. D. 120

Ignatius, in his letter to the Ephesians, refers in unmistakable terms to Paul's letter to the same church: "Ye are initiated into the mysteries of the gospel with Paul . . . who in all his epistle makes mention of you in Christ Jesus" (chap. 12). He shows unmistakable familiarity with First Corinthians: "Let my spirit be accounted as nothing for the sake of the cross, which is a stumbling-block to those that do not believe, but to us salvation and life eternal. Where is the wise man? where is the disputer?" (chap. 18; *cf.* 1 Cor. 1 : 18, 20.) Besides a few such formal quotations, there are numerous references to other apostolic writings and echoes of the Gospels, such as the following: "The last

times are come upon us" (1 John 2 : 18); "the wrath to come" (Matt. 3 : 7); "the tree is made manifest by its fruit" (Matt. 12 : 33); "that we may be his temples" (1 Cor. 6 : 19); "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10); "for this end did the Lord suffer the ointment to be poured upon his head" (John 12 : 7). And in the letter to the Romans occurs another exact quotation from the Gospel: "For what shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world, but lose his own life" (Matt. 16 : 26).

The most definite and precise statement of the attitude of Ignatius to both Testaments is in his letter to the Philadelphians: "When I heard some saying, If I do not find it in the ancient Scriptures, I will not believe the Gospel; on my saying to them, It is written, they answered me, That remains to be proved. But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient; his cross and death and resurrection, and the faith which is by him, are undefiled monuments of antiquity; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified" (chap. 8).

The question of canonicity, however, was not yet so much as mentioned, and in one case Ignatius quotes (according to Jerome) from a lost

Gospel of the Nazarenes: "When, for instance, he came to those who were with Peter, he said to them, 'Lay hold, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit'" (*To the Smyrneans,* chap. 3), which is a variant reading of Luke 24 : 39.

Nothing illustrates better the change that took place in the treatment of the apostolic writings, than a comparison of the shorter recension of the Ignatian letters with the longer—a half-century later at least. In the shorter recension, the formal and exact quotations are few, not more than one or two in a letter, and the other allusions are confined for the most part to brief phrases or clauses. The chief thing that makes the later recension longer, is that these brief references, these echoing phrases have been expanded into long and exact quotations; and where there is neither quotation nor allusion in the shorter form, passages more or less apposite have been carefully sought out and inserted. In other words, take the longer recension and erase from it the quotations from the New Testament, and there is left substantially the shorter text! The fact is eloquent. We are shown, as by an object-lesson, how the appreciation of the apostolic writ-

ings as Scripture was growing in the second century.

We find in the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians (not later than 150), as we might expect, a definite progress in precision of quotation, marking accurately the increased esteem in which the apostolic writings had come to be held. This letter, of about twenty-five hundred words, contains a dozen citations from the New Testament that are either verbally exact or nearly so, and a score or two of brief phrases, such as: "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6 : 7); "we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2 : 12); "let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4 : 26). The writings from which Polycarp quotes are: the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the Acts, Romans, both Epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, both letters to the Thessalonians, and both to Timothy. Besides these, the first Epistle of John is quoted or unmistakably referred to not fewer than eleven times. Direct mention is made (chap. 3) of Paul's letter to the Philippians, and there are several possible allusions to this epistle, but no formal quotation from it.

A. D. 150

It is interesting to note that in one case Poly-

carp quotes from Tobit, precisely as he does from Psalms and Isaiah. Here is an unconscious testimony that not merely the New Testament Canon, but the Old Testament as well, was still unsettled.[1] Polycarp does not call any of his authorities "Scripture," but he evidently treats them as such, and as equally authoritative. The idea that the apostolic writings are Scripture, and are generally conceded to possess that character and authority, must be assumed to be latent in the consciousness of all Christians by the year 150, in order to explain the tone and manner in which the Fathers cite from their text, and still more from the way in which they have saturated their minds with the ideas and vocabulary of the New Testament. Nothing had yet occurred to call forth a formal statement of this latent idea, and it therefore remained latent, but not the less influential. It has not yet been definitely decided what and how many writings shall be so accepted—the time for

[1] This is an investigation of the Canon of the New Testament alone, and ought not to be complicated by the admission of matters pertaining to the Old Testament Canon. But it may be pointed out, as additional illustration of the uncertain limits of the Old Testament Canon, that Jesus himself quoted from the Wisdom of God, according to Luke, 11 : 49, 50; that Jude and Second Peter quote from the book of Enoch; that Irenæus quotes at length from the prophecy of Baruch (*Adv. Haer.*, v. 35). These instances might be greatly multiplied, but are sufficient to make clear the fact.

raising that question had not arrived—but that a group of writings claiming apostolic origin and sanction is now received as equally authoritative with the Old Testament cannot well be doubted. It took not more than half a century for the development of this idea and its general acceptance.

We see the final step taken and the formal acknowledgment made in the so-called Epistle of Barnabas. Though it is now certain that this is not a writing of the apostolic age, and that the Barnabas of the Acts can therefore have had no connection with it, it was long believed to be from his pen, and on that ground was widely accepted as Scripture. It cannot be dated much, if any, later than the year 150, and is therefore a witness of about the same time as Polycarp's letter. The greater part of the quotations in the first section of Barnabas are from the Old Testament, and this makes all the more significant the citation at the close of chap. 4, with the formula "it is written," of our Lord's words in Matt. 22 : 14: "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is the first instance in a Christian writer of the formal recognition of a New Testament writing as Scripture, in the same sense as the Old Testament. It

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differs, however, only in this explicit formality, from the quotations in Polycarp, and even in Ignatius and the Didache, all of which, as we have seen, actually treat the New Testament as Scripture, without calling it by that name.

That these are no rash assertions, or unwarranted inferences, becomes evident when we study the Apologies of Justin, called the Martyr. They are little later than Barnabas; in fact, the first Apology is probably a substantially contemporaneous document. In these writings the quotations from the New Testament are at once more restricted and more extensive than in any previous literature of the period. They are more restricted, in that the apologetic purpose of Justin leads him to compare the teachings of Christ with those among the heathen who professed to teach the way of life, and so his quotations are wholly from the Gospels. They are more extensive in that his citations are more numerous and elaborate than those in any preceding writer. The quotations from the Gospel of Matthew, and the clear allusions to it, in all the Apostolic Fathers, amount only to forty-nine, while Justin alone has forty-three. The Gospel of Luke is more or less clearly

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cited by the Apostolic Fathers sixteen times, while Justin quotes from it, with equal or greater clearness, nineteen times. The full discussion of Justin's quotations, however, belongs to the next chapter.

In the works of Irenæus we find the idea of the scriptural character and authority of the apostolic writings held as a doctrine of the Catholic Church. His great treatise "Against Heresies" has survived only in an imperfect Latin version; but it was composed about 185, and the imperfections of the extant form do not appreciably mar its value as a witness in our matter. Throughout the treatise, Irenæus (who was bishop of Lyons, and was a martyr there in the fiery persecution under Marcus Aurelius, about 190) speaks, as of a thing uncontroverted and incontrovertible among Christians, of the writings of evangelists and apostles as constituting Scripture along with the law and the prophets (I. 3, 6; 8, 1; 9, 1). He speaks of the "sacred Scriptures" as including the parables (II. 27, 1). He says that heretics are "confuted from the Scriptures," and immediately quotes from the writings of Paul (2 Cor. 2 : 6) to confute them. Against Cerinthus

A. D. 185

and those Gnostics who would reject the Gospel of John he argues that "it is not possible that the Gospels can be either more nor fewer in number than they are," and proceeds to give various mystical reasons for this number: there are four zones of the world, and four principal winds, so it is fitting that the church should have four pillars. The "winged creatures" of Isaiah typified the gospel, and as the creatures were quadriform, so should the gospel be quadriform. God has given four covenants to the race, hence there should be four Gospels. The reasoning of Irenæus we may find fantastic and inconclusive, not to say childish, but this defect does not invalidate his implicit testimony to this fact: in his day to reject any one of our four canonical Gospels was reckoned the mark of a heretic.

But perhaps the most interesting, and certainly the most significant, thing to be gleaned from Irenæus is his idea of the relation of the Scriptures to the church. There has been, he contends, a perpetual succession of bishops in the churches founded by the apostles, especially in the church "founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul" (III. 3, 1). The church has been made the sole de-

pository of truth (III. 4, 1). True knowledge (as distinguished from the false *gnosis* of the heretics) consists in the doctrine of the apostles. It is to be discovered through reading the Scriptures, without falsification, and a diligent exposition in harmony with the Scriptures (IV. 33, 8). To the question that would naturally suggest itself, What are the Scriptures? Irenæus does not directly reply by giving a list, but quotes with manifest approval the words of "a presbyter," whom some editors have conjectured to be Polycarp: "And then shall every word also seem consistent to him, if he for his part diligently read the Scriptures in company with those who are presbyters in the Church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine as I have pointed out" (IV, 32, 1).

From these scattered remarks of Irenæus it is clear that his doctrine, reduced to systematic statement, was about as follows: The Catholic Church, distinguishable by its regular succession of bishops from the apostles, was made by the apostles the sole depository of their teaching, *i. e.*, the truth. It is the ancient and trustworthy witness to the doctrine of the apostles, and the custodian of their writings. These writings are

authenticated by being publicly read by the presbyters. Whoever should accept as Scripture those writings, and those only, thus approved by public reading in the churches, might be sure that he had the truth. Here we have stated for the first time the germinal idea of the Canon, and also its genetic principle: the Canon consists of those writings that have been approved by the practice of the churches in having them publicly read by the presbyters. The usage of the churches is thus definitely stated by Irenæus to be the test of what does and what does not constitute Scripture.

While this usage of the New Testament writings as Scripture thus prevails from the first among Christian writers, and the assertion of their character as such begins about the middle of the second century, we do not find, and should not expect to find, any doctrine of the inspiration of these writings in the early Fathers. The implied basis of their acceptance as authoritative is, of course, a belief that they are in some special sense the word of God, and not the word of man alone, but we should naturally expect the acceptance first and the dogmatic justification of it later. That is precisely what we do find.

The first writer to speak explicitly on this question is Justin. In his first Apology [1] he asserts inspiration as a fact, but is content to treat the question with great brevity: "But when you hear the utterances of the prophets, spoken as it were personally, you must not suppose that they are spoken by the inspired themselves, but by the divine Word who moves them." In the "Exhortation to the Greeks," which was formerly attributed to Justin, but is now believed to be the work of Tatian, his pupil, the subject is treated at greater length: "For neither by nature nor by human conception is it possible for men to know things so great and divine, but by the gift which then descended from above upon the holy men, who had no need of rhetorical art, nor of uttering anything in a contentious or quarrelsome manner, but to present themselves pure to the energy of the divine Spirit, in order that the divine plectrum itself, descending from heaven, and using righteous men as an instrument and like a harp or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of things divine and heavenly." [2] This teaching is not in so many words applied specifically to the New Testament, but the apostolic

[1] 1. 36. [2] c. 8.

writings are quoted on equal terms with the "prophets," and it is evident that Tatian held the same views regarding their inspiration.

In the last decades of the second century the doctrine of inspiration of the apostolic writings becomes clear and unmistakable. Irenæus not only quotes them repeatedly as Scripture, but explicitly declares that we should be "most properly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and his Spirit." [1] He argues vehemently, if not cogently, that one God was the author of both Testaments—this in opposition to certain Gnostics who maintained that the Old Testament is not of divine origin and authority, but was inspired, at least in part, by the Demiurge. It had already come about that the authority of the Old Testament was more in need of assertion and defense among Christians than the New.

Theophilus of Antioch (180), an Eastern contemporary of Irenæus, is not less explicit: "But men of God, carrying in them a holy spirit or borne along by the Spirit (πνευματοφόροι) and becoming prophets, being inspired and made wise by God, became God-taught and holy and right-

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, ii. 28, 2.

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eous." [1] And again: "Moreover, concerning the righteousness that the law enjoins, confirmatory utterances are found both with the prophets and in the Gospels, because they all spoke inspired by one Spirit of God." [2] Elsewhere he calls John "one of the spirit-bearing men," and quotes from the Gospel as of higher religious authority than the Old Testament. It is plain therefore that the East and the West were fully agreed on this matter considerably before the close of the second century.

It would seem also that there was early developed as "high" a doctrine of inspiration as that held by modern theologians. Gaius, rather earlier than later, had said, "For either they do not believe that the divine Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit, and thus are infidels; or they think themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and what are they then but demoniacs?" [3] This is surely verbal inspiration in its extreme form. But so rigid a theory of the Spirit's action, while held by some of the Fathers, cannot be said to have gained general acceptance. The figure of the musician and his instrument, used by Ta-

[1] *Ad Antol.*, ii. 9. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 12; ii. 22.
[3] Eusebius, H. E., v. 28.

tian in the passage already cited, became the favorite illustration of patristic literature, and stands in lieu of a more formal statement of the doctrine.

So Athenagoras, writing about 177, remarks: "We have for witnesses of the things we apprehend and believe, prophets, men who have pronounced concerning God and the things of God, guided by the Spirit of God. And you too, will admit . . . that it would be irrational for us to cease to believe in the Spirit from God, who moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments. . . . Prophets who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute."[1] Clement of Alexandria makes a different and striking use of music to illustrate the agreement of the writers of Scripture:[2] "You may take music in another way, as the ecclesiastical symphony at once of the law and the prophets, and the apostles along with the Gospel." And his faith in the sufficiency, not to say inerrancy, of these writings is sufficiently evidenced by this re-

[1] "Plea for Christians," c. 7, 9. [2] Strom., vi. 11.

mark:[1] "But those who are ready to toil in the most excellent pursuits, will not desist from the search after truth, till they get the demonstration from the Scriptures themselves." It is worth while to note also that Clement is the first to apply to the New Testament Scriptures and their writers the term afterward so widely used in theological literature for inspiration, God-breathed (θεοπνεύστος).

With the third century the doctrine of inspiration must be regarded as finally established as a fundamental Christian teaching. In the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Hippolytus, it is so prominent that no reader of these Fathers can fail to be impressed by it, and quotations would be superfluous. But we have also an unconscious testimony to the estimate placed on the Scriptures, by the beginning in the second century of their systematic study and the writing of commentaries on them. If we may believe tradition, the Gnostic Heracleon wrote a commentary on John's Gospel about 170. The method of interpretation that was adopted from the first, also points unmistakably in the same direction. All the early commentators used the allegorical

[1] Strom., vii. 16.

method, and as Sanday well says,[1] "Only in a book that is regarded as possessing a peculiar sacredness and authority is the attempt likely to be made to elicit a sense from the words other than the obvious and literal." The Fathers continually accuse heretics of perverting Scripture, but could there be more serious perversion than the allegorizing of the orthodox Fathers themselves? Let any one read Origen on John, for example, and declare in favor of orthodoxy—if he can.

[1] "Inspiration," p. 89.

III

THE BEGINNINGS OF A COLLECTION

III

EARLY Christian literature is on the one hand the product of the Christian life, and on the other the product of the Christian Church. The study of that literature in all its phases is inseparable from the study of the gradual development of the Christian life and of those ecclesiastical institutions in which it found expression. The investigation of the Canon in particular must be regarded as part and parcel of the history of the Catholic Church, which was developed in the second century.

And, in examining the literature of the second century, as has already been hinted, it is important that we do not expect too much. It was not an age of great literary activity among Christians, but of missionary effort. Of the extent and fruitfulness of that missionary activity, Harnack has lately furnished impressive evidence.[1] Men were too much occupied with the oral proclamation of the gospel at first to give much attention to the

[1] *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christenthums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, Leipzig, 1902; English translation in two volumes, London, 1904, entitled "The Expansion of Christianity."

composition of homiletic writings, and the time for doctrinal treatises had not yet come. What Papias tells us of his preference for oral tradition over the written word was doubtless characteristic of the age.[1] And we can easily understand how men should have preferred listening to those who had been actual companions and disciples of the apostles to reading about the same things in books. Besides, the books were at first few and not accessible to all.

Many lamentations have been uttered over the lost treasures of the Christian literature of this period. For example: "It may have contained many childish, many grotesque, many foolish things. . . But it must have contained passages of inspired beauty and grandeur, and these the world can ill afford to lose." [2] These regrets do not seem to be justified by anything found in the literature that has survived. We search in vain through the Fathers of this period for "passages of inspired beauty and grandeur." Writers deceive themselves even more than they mislead

[1] "If then any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders. . . For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice." Quoted by Eusebius, H. E., iii. 38. 4.

[2] "Formation of the New Testament," Ferris, p. 214.

others by such unfounded remarks. Whether we estimate the value of lost books from the fragments of them that have survived in the form of quotations by the Fathers whose writings we have, or by the character of the few specimens that have been recently recovered, the conclusion is warranted that the cream of the early literature has been preserved, and that the recovery of the lost portion would gratify curiosity far more than extend knowledge or edify the church. As for any supposed invaluable books that have vanished without leaving a trace, the existence of such books is an unproved hypothesis, and a most improbable one.

That which remains, we may conclude, will afford a fair test of the spiritual value of what has been lost. No reader who has learned for himself the spiritual barrenness of books like the Shepherd, once regarded by no inconsiderable portion of the church as Scripture, and the infinitesimal increment of value added by the recent discovery of documents like the Didache and the Gospel of Peter, can be easily persuaded that the world would be made wiser or better, or that a single hungry soul would be fed by the recovery of every lost writing of the second century. That

we have suffered any irreparable loss, scholars will be slow to believe, and still slower to assert. Let us comfort ourselves, and no longer mourn the loss of these purely imaginary treasures of Christian antiquity, and save our tears for some real sorrow—such as failure to understand correctly the literature that is actually in our possession.

There is every reason to believe that the Gospels were not the earliest apostolic writings to be read in public, but rather the Pauline Epistles. So far as we know, the letters of Paul to the churches were the earliest Christian literature. Ramsay has plausibly argued that, in a literary age like the first century, the process of reducing the oral gospel to writing must have begun the very year of the crucifixion of Jesus—fragmentary records of sayings and doings at first.[1] When Luke wrote there were in existence "many" such attempts, and this can hardly be restricted to the Gospel of Mark and another unknown "source," which are all that critics can now definitely trace in the third Gospel. But however plausible this reasoning may be, it is purely *a priori*, and is unsupported by a single positive fact. Not a line of such writing has survived, nor even a certain

[1] "Letters to the Seven Churches," pp. 4-6.

reference to any such composition. We repeat: so far as our knowledge goes, Paul's letters are the earliest Christian literature.

The conjecture that these letters were the first Christian writings to be publicly read, does not depend for credibility merely on the supposed fact that they were composed several decades earlier than any Gospel, but upon the unquestionable fact that they were in large part written for the express purpose of being publicly read in the churches to which they were sent, while the Gospels disclose no such apparent purpose. Indeed, the Gospel of Luke, from its dedication to the "most excellent Theophilus" would seem to have been intended rather for private instruction than for public or liturgical reading. But reading to the whole church is evidently the intent in all the apostolic letters, and especially in those of Paul. That was the only practicable way, so far as we can see, by which their contents could be communicated to the whole church.[1] The importance of these letters, and the value that would be from the first attached to them, would lead most nat-

[1] Not only do the general contents of the Epistles necessarily imply the public reading of them to the churches, but the salutations in the final chapters of Romans, for example, could have been conveyed so well in no other way (Rom. 16 : 5, 22, 23).

urally to their careful preservation and repeated public reading.

In the case of several Pauline letters, we can get out of the region of conjecture into that of solid fact. At the close of the first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle says, "I adjure you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren" (1 Thess. 5 : 27). He regards the matter of the public reading as so important that he uses the formula of the Jewish courts for administering an oath. In the letter to the Colossians we find this: "And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea"[1] (Col. 4 : 16). Here not only the public reading of letters, but their interchange between churches is provided for. It is true that many scholars of high authority dispute the Pauline authorship of the letter to the Colossians. Supposing them for the moment to be right, then at the very least we have here testimony from the early part of the second century that the interchange and public

[1] Whether this "epistle from Laodicea" is a lost letter of the apostle, or is to be identified with some surviving epistle, *e. g.*, Ephesians, is a question long debated and still unsettled. See the commentaries of Ellicott and Lightfoot on this passage.

reading of Paul's letters were already established practices,[1] which is the very thing we are just now most concerned to know.

Other letters of Paul had this encyclical character, notably Galatians, which is explicitly addressed to all the churches of a large region; and this holds good whatever view we take of the meaning of "Galatia" in Paul's day. It is highly probable that the letters to the Ephesians and Philippians—especially the former, which in some early Fathers and MSS is called the Epistle to Laodicea—had also this encyclical character. Other New Testament writings were doubtless written for public reading. That such is the case with the Apocalypse is clearly indicated by 1 : 3, as well as by the fact that its introductory section consists of letters to seven representative churches of Asia.

The originals of letters so valuable and so highly prized as these certainly were would be jealously preserved by the churches that received them, and copies would be made for other churches; or, if the original autograph was sent

[1] On the facilities in the Roman empire for the circulation of letters see Ramsay, "Letters to the Seven Churches," pp. 23-34. To show how churches passed letters about in the early centuries, see Eusebius, H. E., v. 25. And compare Gregory on the Canon, p. 159.

to another church as a loan, a copy would be made before its return. In this way churches would come, in no long time, to possess collections of Paul's letters. The desire to make these collections complete would soon follow, and would lead to search for additional copies, until each important church would have what it considered a complete collection. By the end of the first century we may fairly suppose this process to be nearly or quite completed, and the churches must by that time have been virtually agreed as to what constituted a complete collection of the Pauline letters.

This account of the process is hypothetical, but the result is not hypothesis; it is fact. And the hypothesis concerning the process is confirmed at several points by evidence. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians shows that the Asiatic churches of his day eagerly sought letters of other distinguished men than apostles. He sends with his letter those of Ignatius, "as many as we had by us."[1] The making of collections by the churches is a custom already well established by 150, and of course must have begun much earlier.

[1] Polycarp to the Philippians, ch. xiii. 1. 2. Eusebius has several references to this custom as being continued in later times, H. E., iv. 23; v. 25.

When Clement wrote to the Corinthians (97), and Ignatius to the Philippians (117), both made reference to the possession by these churches of Paul's letters to them, and alluded to the custom of publicly reading the letters.

Nor should we look on this collecting of letters by the churches as something exceptional or abnormal, peculiar to the Christian communities. The very reverse was the case. It was not uncommon for collections of letters to be made, as we learn from classical literature. Soon after the death of Aristotle, 322 B. C., a collection of letters purporting to be his was published in Athens. It turned out to be a rather clever forgery, but there would have been no such attempt at fabrication had there not been even then an established custom of collecting and preserving the letters of distinguished men. The letters of Cicero, familiar to every schoolboy (as Macaulay delighted to say), are another case in point. Paul's letters were especially worthy of collection and preservation by the early Christian communities, apart from any question of inspiration. They were genuine letters, personal communications to particular churches, the unstudied outpourings of the apostle's heart, but

they contained discussions of the fundamental principles of Christianity and practical directions about the Christian life, that were of universal application and would be valuable information and counsel for all churches, as well as for those directly addressed.

Not only is our conjectural history of the first collections of apostolic writings confirmed by the few patristic statements recoverable, but the familiarity with these writings shown by the earliest Fathers, as set forth in the preceding chapter, points to the same conclusions. For a time the collections of the churches would be practically the only collections—there could be few complete private copies, perhaps none—and the fact that the earliest Fathers show such intimate acquaintance with the ideas and phraseology of the apostles, even when they do not formally quote, warrants the conclusion that they gained this knowledge largely, if not wholly, through hearing the apostolic writings publicly read. Ignatius and Polycarp, not to say Clement, must either have owned or have heard often read, a practically complete collection of the Pauline Epistles, so intimate is the knowledge shown by them of nearly all the letters. The East, therefore, seems

to have taken the lead in this making of collections, as we might perhaps have expected; and the first traces of such collections are found in Asia Minor and Egypt.[1]

Of course, this public reading of the Pauline Epistles would at first be occasional and spontaneous, not a matter of rule, but such reading would tend to pass into a regular, liturgical use. Such was the process by which all the liturgy of the church developed. There is a very suggestive passage in a letter of Dionysius of Corinth, quoted by Eusebius.[2] Writing to the Roman Church, he says, "To-day we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle. From it, whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, as also from the former epistle, which was written to us through Clement."[3] Now if a letter of Clement's would be thus preserved by the Corinthian church, and was frequently read at its services on the Lord's Day, much more may we conclude that a letter of Paul's would be prized and read. Another sentence

A. D. 170

[1] Harnack, "Dogma," Vol. II., p. 42, note, recognizes this.

[2] H. E., iv. 23. 11.

[3] Compare a similar testimony to Hegesippus to the preservation at Corinth of Clement's letter, also preserved by Eusebius (iii. 16).

quoted by Eusebius from the same Dionysius is quite as significant. Complaining that some of his own letters have been garbled by false teachers, he adds: "It is not wonderful then that some have attempted to adulterate the Lord's Scriptures also (*τῶν κυριακῶν γραφῶν*), since they have formed designs against writings that are of less account." From which we are fairly entitled to infer that "the Lord's Scriptures" were honored above all others and existed in collections that were jealously guarded, in spite of which they had been corrupted by heretics, *i. e.*, their text had been mutilated or perverted. The allusion is probably to the heresy of Marcion, whose relation to the Canon will be discussed in a later chapter. A little later than Dionysius, Tertullian[1] distinctly implies that this custom had been continuous to his day: "Run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still preeminent in their places, in which their authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally."

A. D. 200

But if the collection of Epistles began first, collections of the Gospels must have been begun soon

[1] *De Praescr. Haer.*, 36.

after they were written. We have this solid, unquestionable fact to begin with, that Tatian wrote his *Diatessaron* not long after the middle of the second century. He had before him, and used in his work, our four canonical Gospels, and this presupposes the recognition of these Gospels as a collection from about 125. Not less than a generation can be allowed for such a collection to acquire a currency and an esteem that would inspire Tatian with the wish and purpose to harmonize them into a single continuous narrative.

We probably cannot push the date further back than this—indeed, the gathering of the Gospels into a collection could hardly be supposed, with good reason, to have occurred much earlier than that. Of course, the existence of the Gospels separately at an earlier date is another question, though even of that direct external testimony, apart from the quotations we have already examined, is not very satisfactory. Some of the citations from the earlier Fathers will not bear the interpretations that have been offered, or warrant the inferences that have been drawn. Ignatius,[1] for example, says: "I stand by the gospel as by the flesh of Christ, and by the apos-

[1] *Ad Phil.*, 5.

tles as by the college of the presbyters of the churches. I love the prophets also, because they hope in Christ, and they too have themselves proclaimed the gospel." The latter clause shows clearly in what sense "gospel" is to be understood in the former—it is the oral gospel rather than the written, or the content rather than the form. In no event can it be admitted to prove the existence in the time of Ignatius of written Gospels, still less of a collection.

In the Epistle to Diognetus, the reference to a written record seems a little clearer, almost certain in fact:[1] "Thenceforth the fear of the law is sung, the grace of the prophets is recognized, the faith of the Gospels is established, the tradition of the apostles is guarded, and the grace of the church leaps for joy." This may be taken, with slight hesitation, as the first unmistakable mention of the Gospels as books, distinct from the gospel as a message. Even when Justin,[2] who writes several decades later, uses such phrases as, "as it is written in the gospel," and "which are called the gospel," it is far from certain that he means any definite book. He speaks elsewhere of several "Me-

A. D. 130

[1] c. 11. [2] *Dial. c. Try.* 100; *Apol.* 1 : 66.

moirs "[1] of the apostles, and he evidently chooses this word in writing to a heathen emperor as less technical and more certain to be understood than the Christian term "Gospel"; but in such passages as those cited above, he probably means the content of those "Memoirs"—the gospel truth, their total teaching—and not the books themselves, or any of their number.

Few matters pertaining to patristic literature have been more hotly debated, and few are still in greater uncertainty, than the question, What and how many of our present Gospels did Justin have and use? Our only grounds for deciding the question are the quotations in his writings, and these we shall now briefly examine. The uncertainty that still obtains regarding this question would have been much less, were not so many critics prone to make daring hypothesis take the place of painstaking investigation. It throws great light on the problem to know accurately what was Justin's habit of mind with regard to quotation, and we fortunately have an exact test of his literary conscience in his profuse quotations from the Septuagint. These sometimes

[1] *απομνημονεύματα*, a word familiar to every student of the classics, as the name that Xenophon chose for his recollections of his master, Socrates.

exactly agree with the Septuagint text that has come down to us, but in more cases they surprisingly differ from that text.

A critical analysis of these differences shows that of eighty-nine such citations, twenty-three (about twenty-five per cent.) are substantially accurate, the differences being only such as variation of text would satisfactorily explain. Thirty-three give the substance of the passage quoted, with material variations in the form; eight are adaptations, and eight are combinations of two or more separate passages into one. Seventeen passages are quoted more than once (nearly twenty per cent. of the whole), some as many as three times, and almost never twice exactly alike. We find also that Justin quotes as from Isaiah a passage found in Jeremiah, and *vice versa;* he says Jeremiah in one case where he should say Daniel; and Zephaniah for Zechariah.

These facts may be taken to prove to a demonstration that Justin habitually quoted from memory—a memory unusually full-stored and retentive, and as verbally accurate as we have a right to expect, since he nearly always gives the sense of a passage, though seldom its precise verbal form, but a memory that at times plays

him strange tricks. Gregory very pointedly and judiciously says of Justin, "He quotes the Greek Old Testament in such a way that if it were the text of the Gospels many an investigator would be inclined to call it a quotation from an unknown Gospel." [1] Evidently then, we are not to expect from this Father exact quotations, such as can be secured only by careful reference to a manuscript, even if one were available to him when he wrote.

Turning now to Justin's citations from the Gospels, we find precisely the same phenomena. He does not duplicate New Testament passages as freely as Old, but in at least one case he quotes a verse twice with material verbal differences, though with no alteration of the sense. His variations from the text of our Gospels are of the same nature as those already found in citations from the Septuagint, showing the persistence of his mental habits and their uniform working. The nature of these variations will be made clearer by a careful comparison of a few characteristic cases:

Justin	New Testament
I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.	I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9 : 13).

[1] Canon, p. 89.

JUSTIN	NEW TESTAMENT
If ye love them that love you, what new thing do ye? for even fornicators[1] do this. But I say unto you, Pray for your enemies, and love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.	For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? (Matt. 5:46). Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you (Luke 6:27, 28).
To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy coat or cloak forbid not. And whosoever shall be angry is in danger of the fire. And everyone that compelleth thee to go with him a mile, follow him two. And let your good works shine before men, that they, seeing them, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.	To him that smiteth thee on one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also (Luke 6 : 29). Every one that is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the hell of fire (Matt. 5 : 22, 23). And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain (Matt. 5:41). Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

[1] This curious variation suggests that Justin may have had a different reading in his text from any now known. The *textus receptus* has here τελῶναι, while Westcott and Hort and most other critics read ἐθνικοί. It is at least possible that Justin's reading, πορνοί, is not a mere slip of memory, but has behind it contemporary MS authority. He does not often use words utterly different from our present Greek text, but often substitutes synonyms and different constructions.

JUSTIN	NEW TESTAMENT
Fear not them that kill you, and after that can do no more; but fear him who is able after death to cast both soul and body into hell.	And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10 : 28.) Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn ye whom ye shall fear: Fear him who after he hath killed hath authority to cast into hell (Luke 12 : 4, 5).
Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.	Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22 : 21).
Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. For whosoever heareth me, and doeth my sayings, heareth him that sent me. And many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy name and done wonders? And then	Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 7 : 21). He that heareth you heareth me . . . and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me (Luke 10 : 16). Then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink

JUSTIN	NEW TESTAMENT
will I say unto them, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Then shall there be wailing and gnashing of teeth when the righteous shall shine as the sun, and the wicked are sent into everlasting fire. For many shall come in my name, clothed outwardly in sheep's clothing, but inwardly being ravening wolves. By their works ye shall know them. And every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.	in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets (Luke 13 : 26). Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not . . . by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity (Matt. 7 : 22, 23). There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father (Matt. 13 : 42, 43). Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt 7 : 15). Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7 : 19, 20).

A careful comparison of these and similar texts warrants two conclusions. The first is, that Justin was certainly familiar with our canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and had a text

substantially identical with that of the Vatican MS. The theory is not tenable that he possessed and quoted from some collection of our Lord's sayings differing from the canonical Gospels. There cannot have been, in his day, Gospels accepted as authoritative, and having so nearly the same contents, other than Matthew and Luke. Such writings could not have existed and perished without leaving some trace. The second conclusion is, that he did not have any text of the Gospels before him as he wrote, but quoted from a well-stored memory. By this method he often combined parallel or similar passages from the two Gospels, and generally gave rather the sense of a passage than its exact form. On the other hand, brief and pregnant sayings have fastened themselves in his memory, and he cites them with exact verbal accuracy. Both the agreements and the disagreements between his citations and the original text, are better explained on this hypothesis than on any other.

That Justin was acquainted with our synoptic Gospels is now very generally admitted, and this of course implies that at least a collection of those Gospels was now commonly received and publicly read in the churches. The questions still under

dispute are, Did he use Gospels other than the first three of our Canon? and, Did he know and use the fourth Gospel? The first of these questions is too technical, and of too little importance for our inquiry, to be here discussed. The relations of the non-canonical Gospels to the Canon are examined in a general way in another part of the investigation. The second question, however, is of great importance and is capable of discussion adequate for our purpose without technicalities.

The evidence in favor of the conclusion that Justin knew and used the Gospel of John is both general and specific. General evidence is his acquaintance with ideas that can be reasonably supposed to have been derived from no other source. Throughout his writings he makes prominent the doctrine of the Logos, which he must have received either from John or from Philo. But there is a notable difference between these two forms of the Logos doctrine, the differentiating feature being the *incarnation,* which is fundamental in John's theology, but utterly foreign to Philo's philosophy. Now this is the very thing on which Justin seizes and exploits to the utmost. He could have derived this from no other source than the fourth Gospel—at least, no other source has

been even plausibly conjectured. The preexistence of Christ is not taught anywhere in the synoptists, and nowhere but from the Gospel of John could Justin have obtained such an idea as this, "That Christ is the firstborn of God, being the Logos of which every race of men have been partakers, we have been taught and have declared before."[1] And since Justin distinctly sets this forth as an idea that he has been taught, the hypothesis that he independently originated it— improbable in the extreme *per se*—is excluded.

Other ideas that are distinctly Johannine are found in Justin. It will be sufficient to mention one more:[2] "For that he was the only begotten of the Father of the universe, having been begotten by him in a peculiar manner as his Logos and Power, and having afterward become a man through the Virgin, as we have learned from the 'Memoirs,' I showed before." The virgin birth can only be learned from the "Memoirs" of Matthew and Luke, but the idea that Christ was the only-begotten Son could be derived from no other source than the fourth Gospel. That Justin was well acquainted with that book must be said to be rendered extremely probable by his

[1] *Apol.* 1 : 46. [2] *Dial.* 105.

knowledge of these peculiarly Johannine ideas and phrases.

That probability becomes moral certainty when we look at the specific evidence. As Mercutio said of his wound, "'T is not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door; but 't is enough, 't will serve." It is the best-known passage in Justin's "Apology," his description of Christian baptism:

> I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. For, in the name of the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all. . . And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings (*Apol.* 1 : 60).

How can any candid reader of this passage doubt that here we have a citation by Justin of

John 3 : 3-5? Yet it has been obstinately disputed that this is such a citation, on the sole ground that the quotation is not verbally accurate. Not one reader in ten of this page, one ventures to assert, can tell exactly in what the inaccuracy consists, without consulting his New Testament, so fairly is the meaning of Christ's words given. To insist on precise verbal accuracy in this case, in view of what we have discovered about Justin's habits in the matter of quotation, is inadmissible. And it should perhaps be added that this decision is greatly strengthened when we study the habits of the Fathers generally in regard to quotations from the New Testament, and even their citations of this particular passage. Dr. Ezra Abbot made a special examination of patristic literature to determine this very point, and shows conclusively that Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nyssa do not quote this passage with any more verbal accuracy than Justin.[1] Is it not absurd to apply to a Father of the second century a standard of perfect accuracy which is not acknowledged or ob-

[1] The Fourth Gospel. Essays by Ezra Abbot, Andrew P. Peabody, and Bishop Lightfoot. New York, 1891. See esp. pp. 26-37.

served down to the fifth, if even then? And if free citation of this same text is no evidence that the later Fathers were ignorant of the fourth Gospel, how can the same citation prove that Justin did not know it? And most incredible of all, how can we suppose that the most striking saying in the fourth Gospel should have been hit upon independently by any other writer, or could be quoted by Justin from any other source? Not to mention that no plausible suggestion of another source has ever been made.

Harnack will not be suspected of any over haste to construe evidence in favor of the fourth Gospel, and this is his latest deliverance on this subject: "One must leave open the possibility, yes, a certain probability, that the designation of the fourth Gospel as the work of the apostle was to be found already, in A. D. 155-160, namely, on the part of Justin." [1] In such a case, where Harnack says "probable" we may say "certain."

The most interesting thing, however, that we learn from Justin is the order of Christian worship that obtained in his day. To convince the emperor that the Christian assemblies were harmless he describes them in detail:

[1] *Chronologie*, 1 : 673.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs [1] of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead (i. 67).

Apart from the general interest that attaches to this, the earliest account but one [2] of a Christian

[1] In the preceding chapter Justin says: "For the apostles, in the Memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have delivered unto us," etc. This is an additional reason why we cannot suppose that Justin had in his possession Gospels different from those that we now have. Already certain "Memoirs" were known as "Gospels" in a technical sense. We cannot doubt that they were the four now possessed by us.

[2] An earlier, but much less complete, account of a Christian assembly is given in Pliny's well-known letter to Trajan: ". . . They met

assembly for worship, the thing that immediately concerns us is Justin's statement that the apostolic writings, or some of them, were by his time so firmly accepted as Scripture as to be regularly read and expounded in the public assemblies of Christians, on equal terms with the Old Testament.

We may note in passing that one of the most cogent reasons for regarding the Second Epistle of Peter a pseudonymous second-century composition, and not the work of the apostle whose name it bears, is the reference to the writings of "our beloved brother Paul," and the ranking of them with "the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3 : 16). This is a saying that one can hardly regard as possible much prior to A. D. 150, because the idea does not seem to have taken definite form before that time. If, however, Second Peter was composed about the same time with Justin's Apology, its language exactly coincides with what

on an appointed day before daylight, and sang antiphonally a hymn to Christ, as to some god, binding themselves by a solemn oath (*sacramento*), not for the purpose of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word nor deny a trust when they should be called to deliver it up. After which it was their custom to separate and then to reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal." We have here no mention of the reading of any scriptures, but this is doubtless due rather to Pliny's defective information than to the absence of this feature from Christian worship, even in the year 115, which is the approximate date of this letter.

we know to have been the growing opinion in the church, if, indeed, that opinion cannot be described as by that time universal.

The so-called "catholic" Epistles are so evidently of an encyclical nature, either by express statement or by character of contents, that the case does not require argument. Their traditional name indicates an early perception of the fact. As none of them is addressed to any definite church, and some of them are not addressed to churches, they may well have made their way into general acceptance more slowly than the Pauline Epistles, and hence the early making of a collection of them in a separate group is doubtful. Two of this class of letters won their way to speedy and practically undisputed acceptance among the early churches, the First Epistle of Peter and the First of John. Which of these had the precedence, either of time or of honor, it is difficult to say. If we knew how widely the list of the Muratorian Fragment was accepted—what is covered by that elastic "we"—it might be possible to decide that John's first letter was more rapidly and widely accepted in the West than Peter's. The story of the catholic Epistles, as a separate collection, belongs to a later chapter.

The way in which these collections came to be made and preserved by the churches has not been recorded, but may be conjectured with a high degree of probability. Every Jewish synagogue had, as its principal features, a *bema* or raised platform on which the reader of the Scriptures stood, and an ark or chest, in which the rolls of the law and prophets were kept. These rolls were wrapped in linen cloths, and placed in a case. Many interpreters suppose that the φελόνης, of which the apostle speaks in 2 Tim. 4 : 13, was not a traveling cloak, as our version has it, but a case for the "books" and "parchments" of which mention immediately follows, and so is it rendered in the Syriac version. It is in the highest degree probable—morally certain, indeed —that the Christian assemblies from the beginning adopted a similar method of caring for their sacred books; and as soon as they began to have regular places of meeting, whether in private houses or elsewhere, the ark and its collection of rolls would be the most prized possession of a Christian community.

That by the end of the third century the existence of these collections was so notorious as to be known even to the heathen, is sufficiently

proved by the events of the last great persecution. In his edicts issued in 303 Diocletian struck three heavy and well-directed blows against Christianity: the bishops were to be put to death, the churches were to be confiscated, and the sacred books were to be delivered to the authorities and destroyed. By thus depriving the Christians at one stroke of leaders, places of worship, and sacred books, the emperor believed that the destruction of this feared and hated sect would be assured. It was a shrewd plan, and not the least promising feature of it was the attempted destruction of the sacred books. But this was found the most difficult edict of the three to enforce. It was comparatively easy for the authorities to lay hands on a bishop; even if he tried to conceal himself or flee, which for the most part the bishops declined to do, he could be searched for and found with little difficulty. But the books were a different matter, and if the Christians were determined not to give them up, they could be easily concealed. Not a few Christians, some of them bishops, came forward and surrendered the sacred books in their charge, some saving their lives thereby, only to find themselves thereafter execrated as traitors (*traditores*) by the whole

Christian community. Others pretended to comply, and gave up copies of books like the Shepherd and the Epistle of Barnabas, which, though formerly esteemed as Scripture by some, were by that time coming to be held to belong in a class below the apostolic writings. Though many copies were destroyed, the Christian churches as a whole seem to have preserved their cherished Scriptures, even through the terrible persecution of Diocletian.

There is one other book that must have been definitely accepted as canonical by the time of Justin, and that is the Acts of the Apostles. The evidence for such a conclusion is partly positive and partly negative. We have some definite fact, we have more probable inference. It is significant, as negative evidence, that this is a book about which no question seems ever to have been raised, which could not have been the case if there had been doubt as to its authenticity or authority. Then it was so obviously a continuation of the third Gospel, that acceptance of the Gospel necessarily carried with it the Acts also. It is true that the earliest direct quotation from the Acts is in the letter from the churches of Vienne and Lyons regarding

A. D. 177

the great persecution in those cities, preserved in the history of Eusebius.[1] Alluding to some of their own martyrs, the letter says, "They prayed for those who ordered their torture, as did Stephen, that perfect martyr, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'" (Acts 7 : 60). This letter was written about 177; and little later, if any, Irenæus,[2] in his work on heresies, quotes or summarizes whole chapters from the Acts.

But much earlier than this—indeed, from the beginnings of Christian literature—we have allusions to the book and echoes of its language, such as to convince us that it was in use. Such are the following phrases in Clement: "more willing to give than to receive"; "being especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spake"; "a man after mine own heart, David." This last is found in Acts 13 : 22, where it is not an exact quotation from the Old Testament, but a combination of 1 Sam. 13 : 14 and Ps. 89 : 80. So unique a combination could hardly have been made by a second writer through mere coincidence; it must be a quotation.

Ignatius in his letter to the Smyrneans writes, "And after his resurrection he did eat and drink

[1] H. E., v. 2. [2] iii. 14, 15.

with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually he was united to the Father." There are but two written sources from which this knowledge could be derived, the last chapter of John's Gospel and Acts 10 : 41. The latter is the more probable source. Unwritten tradition may, in any case, be dismissed as too improbable for serious consideration. "Every one shall go to his own place" is a yet more unmistakable echo of Acts 1 : 25.

Polycarp's epistle, brief as it is, has numerous suggestions of the Acts: "If we suffer because of the Name"; "May he give you part and lot"; "whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death"; "which is coming as judge of quick and dead." This last phrase caught the minds of many Fathers; we find it in Barnabas and Justin. "He that made heaven and earth and all that in them is," is also echoed by a number of Fathers, especially in the Epistle to Diognetus. Altogether the evidence is quite sufficient to convince that this book must have belonged to the church collections from an early date, and was read in the churches generally.

The specific purpose of Justin in his writings made it proper, almost necessary, for him to con-

fine his quotations to the Gospels—the teachings of Jesus, not those of Paul, were most likely to convince those for whom he wrote, a heathen emperor and Jews. Any argument from silence here would therefore be entirely worthless, nor is it necessary to quote the few passages in which critics think they see evidence that Justin was acquainted with the Pauline Epistles. We have already seen enough evidence from other sources to convince one who is open to conviction that these were generally known and publicly read, and Justin must be presumed to have been well acquainted with them, though he does not use them.

This, then, is the result of our investigation thus far: About the middle of the second century our four Gospels were generally accepted and read in the Christian churches, together with the Acts, most of the Pauline Epistles, and in all probability also, the first Epistle of Peter and the first Epistle of John. But when we say that these churches did this or that in the second century, there is danger that some will understand concerted action. Of this there is seldom any proof, and it is highly improbable *per se*. The churches instinctively acted on common principles, and thus

without concert substantial uniformity was attained. The unfounded assumption of concert underlies much German writing, not only on the Canon, but on all early church history.

IV.

THE VOICE OF HERESY

IV

HERESY began even during the apostolic age. The letters of Paul contain frequent references to false teachers and false doctrines, and in the First Epistle of John there are allusions by no means obscure to the Docetic heresy. With the progress of time and the growth of Christian churches, heresies became more frequent and won large numbers of adherents. In not a few cases they threatened for a time to become the prevailing belief of Christians,[1] in which case the heresy would have become orthodoxy. Almost every element of the gospel, nearly every teaching contained in the apostolic writings, became in turn the object of question or attack, and the survival of any part of the faith once delivered to the saints is no slight proof of its divine origin and inherent truth.

With regard to the apostolic writings, two policies were pursued by the heretical sects and

[1] The only definition of orthodoxy that is historically verifiable is this: Orthodoxy is that body of opinion regarding Christian truth which at any given time is held by a majority of the church. Truth is not decided by majorities; orthodoxy is.

their leaders. One was to accept their authority and endeavor to establish the heretical doctrine by quotations from these writings, which were often subjected to a forcible exegesis. The other plan was to reject some of the writings and so mutilate others as to make them confirm the heresy. The Fathers continually charge those whom they stigmatize as heretics with these faults. They sometimes seem to make their charge good, and in a few cases there can be little doubt that the charges are well founded. In this matter of quotations, however, we must bear in mind that unfair wresting of sentences from their context is always possible, and that in controversy scrupulous care is necessary if one would be just to his opponent. It does not prepossess us in favor of the fairness of the Fathers, when we read the bitter and intemperate words nearly always written of a heretic.

As an instance very pertinent to our inquiry, we are prepared to discount much of what Tertullian says, when we find him beginning his important treatise "Against Marcion" by describing Pontus and its people in the blackest terms, and then adding: "Nothing however in Pontus is so barbarous and sad as the fact that Marcion was born

there—fouler than any Scythian, more roving than the wagon life of the Sarmatian, more inhuman than the Massagete, more audacious than an Amazon, darker than the sky [of Pontus], colder than its winter, more brittle than its ice, more deceitful than Ister, more craggy than the Caucasus. . . What Pontic mouse ever had such gnawing powers as he who has gnawed the Gospels to pieces?" The passage omitted is too indecent, as well as too abusive, for quotation. Let us be grateful that controversial manners have somewhat improved since the second century. What orthodox writer to-day would use such language regarding a Briggs or a Crapsey?

Bearing constantly in mind, therefore, that we know the early heretics only through writers who have attempted their refutation in such a spirit as Tertullian discloses, and using cautiously the few facts that we are able to glean from a mass of irrelevant detail, we shall still find it established beyond reasonable doubt that the heretics in general did not differ from the orthodox in the second century regarding the authenticity of the apostolic writings. Nor, for the most part, does the question of the authority of the writings seem to have been raised. If a heretic found any writ-

ing too strongly opposed to his teaching to be reconciled with it, the simplest expedient was to ignore it, and commonly this was the course pursued. In the quotations given by the Fathers from the earlier heretical writings—those before 150—the same method of citing seems to prevail that we have found in the orthodox Fathers: frequent allusions, rather than exact quotations, and such a borrowing of words and phrases as indicates at least considerable acquaintance with the apostolic writings.

Thus Simon Magus shows familiarity with Matthew, John, and First Corinthians, which he cites on an equal footing with the Old Testament, precisely as Clement or Polycarp might do. Cerinthus, one of the earlier Gnostics, according to tradition personally opposed as an enemy to the truth by the Apostle John, used the Gospel of Matthew, but is said to have rejected the writings of Paul on account of that apostle's opposition to circumcision. So the exposition of the Ophite heresy, and others closely related to it, as given by Epiphanius, shows that the heretics were intimately acquainted with the books quoted by the Fathers, and relied on them to establish their doctrines. Clear traces are found in the frag-

ments of their writings of Matthew, Luke, John, the Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, and Revelation.

Many extracts are also preserved from Basilides and Valentinus, which show that they attempted to sustain their teachings by quotations from the apostolic writings, often forcing the exegesis, it is true, but not much more than we find the orthodox Fathers doing. Tertullian tells us that Valentinus used "a complete Instrument," by which he apparently means the entire New Testament as then received, but he charges the heretic with mutilating the text, and Irenæus says that he added another Gospel to the canonical four. How much foundation there was for these charges we lack adequate means of judging.

It is worthy of note also that with Heracleon, a follower of Valentinus, originated the allegorical method of interpretation—which presupposes acceptance of the authority of the writings interpreted.[1] For, if a writing lack authority, the simpler way is to reject it altogether. If its authority be admitted, but its literal meaning is awkward to reconcile with one's teaching, the allegorical method can be used to make it mean

[1] Fragments of Heracleon's commentary on the Fourth Gospel may be found in the Cambridge "Texts and Studies," Vol. I., No. 4.

whatever one likes. The Fathers were quick to recognize the advantages of this method, and found it so convenient for the defense of heresy that they adopted it in the cause of orthodoxy.

It is agreed among the Fathers that the first formal attempt at a canon—that is to say, a definite list of all the writings to be accepted as Scripture—was made by Marcion, one of the most active heretics of the second century. That he was a native of Pontus is all that we learn of his origin from the Fathers nearest to him; later writers add that he was the son of the bishop of Sinope. He seems to have been at least a presbyter, possibly a bishop, before leaving the East. He came to Rome somewhere about 150, and is charged with attempting to gain the foremost place there, failing which he became a heretic and was excommunicated. The facts regarding his life are obscure, and for our purpose unimportant; enough that he is known or believed to have traveled widely, establishing churches of his heretical order in many parts of the empire, which became formidable rivals of the Catholic Church and endured to the time of Constantine, or later.

Four of the Fathers—Irenæus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius—have given us informa-

tion more or less detailed about this heresy. In the main particulars they are agreed, and Tertullian especially gives us enough quotations from Marcion's writings to substantiate a good part of what he tells us, provided the quotations are fair and accurate. It is plain that Marcion was a Gnostic, but of a different type from many of that period. Most of the Gnostics might be fairly described as heathen philosophers at bottom, who had attempted to incorporate more or less of the gospel into their systems. Marcion is rather to be looked upon as a Christian who has tried to incorporate certain ideas of heathen philosophy into his faith. He was perplexed by the problem of evil, as every thinker about the world and man has been, and accepted as the best possible solution the dualism of Eastern paganism. Hippolytus maintains that Marcion got his ideas from Empedocles, and gives a rather elaborate exposition of the latter's philosophy to prove it; but he only succeeds in making plain that Marcion did not get his fundamental ideas from the Greek philosopher.[1]

According to Tertullian, confirmed by the other Fathers, and by numerous quotations from Mar-

[1] *Philosophumena*, vii. 17, 18.

cion himself, this heretic asserted the existence of two Gods, or ruling principles (ἀρχαί), "one judicial, harsh, mighty in war; the other mild, placid, and simply good."[1] The former is the Creator, or Demiurge, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. From him proceeds the whole visible creation, including the body of man, and therefore everything material is evil. Marcion attempted to prove this last part of his doctrine from such Scripture texts as, "The good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit, neither the corrupt tree good fruit," from which we see that the good God cannot be the author of this evil world. So when he found Jehovah declaring, "I am he that createth evil" (Isa. 45 : 7), he argued that this Creator could not be the good God.

From this fundamental conception of the universe, Marcion deduced the asceticism that, by general consent, was characteristic of him and his followers. Marriage among them was forbidden: it is the Creator who bids men increase and multiply, and so, to the believers in the good God, marriage can be nothing else than an evil and unchaste thing. Tertullian labors hard to show the difference between this teaching and that of the

[1] *Adv. Marc.*, i. 6.

Montanists, and the best he can make of it is to say that the latter "do not reject marriage, but simply refrain from it"[1]—which comes pretty near being a distinction without a difference. So far did the Marcionites push this hostility to marriage, that they would baptize only celibates and eunuchs—the married only after divorce, or in the article of death.[2] No flesh food must be eaten, and wine was forbidden even in the Eucharist. The blameless lives of the Marcionites are frequently mentioned by their adversaries, and the fact is even recorded that there were not a few martyrs among them.

Man's fall, according to Marcion, shows that the Creator was neither good, prescient, nor powerful—had he been such, no such issue could have happened.[3] The good God has revealed himself in Christ Jesus alone, and the salvation that Christ came to bring is the deliverance of men's souls only, it has nothing to do with their bodies, which perish and are not raised again. The Christ who came to save men was not the Messiah of the prophets, but a totally different being. Nor was he really a man, but only the semblance of

[1] *Adv. Marc.*, i. 39. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 11.
[3] *Ibid.*, i. 19, 24, 27; ii. 5.

one, who was never really born and never really suffered on the cross. For, had he been a man, he would have been united to a material body, in which was the taint inherent in all material things. Like others who held the Docetic view of Christ's person, Marcion quoted Rom. 8 : 3, "God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"—in the likeness, not in the reality.

Marcion therefore consistently rejected the entire Old Testament. The law and the gospel, as he conceived them, proceeded from two different Gods, and must be sharply separated. This decision Tertullian represents as "Marcion's principal work." Starting from such premises, Marcion professed to regard Paul as the only apostle who proclaimed the pure gospel, but we can see this important difference between Marcion and Paul: Marcion would abolish the law, because it is inherently evil, proceeding as it does from the inferior God; Paul would abolish the law, because, while it came from the good God (who was to Paul the only God), and had performed a good service ("the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ"), it had been fulfilled in Christ, who had nailed the law and its ordinances to his cross, and made the law obsolete for one who is justified by

faith in Christ. Ignoring this difference, assuming that Paul and he occupied common ground, Marcion argued from the Pauline Epistles, especially from Galatians, the essential difference between law and gospel, and maintained that the latter only is binding on Christians.

It is this feature of his teaching, no doubt, that led Neander to say of Marcion, "Taking his stand, in the spirit of true Protestantism, on the ground of positive Christianity, he would admit that nothing but the words of Christ and of his genuine disciples ought to be considered as the fountainhead of the true gospel." [1] From the account already given of this heresy and the philosophical grounds on which it rested, it will be evident how little of the real Protestant spirit there was in Marcion. Nor are other writers who speak of Marcion as a "reformer," and deprecate the treatment of him as a heretic, better justified in their remarks.[2] His ideas, as we have seen, were a travesty of the gospel. Can anybody doubt that if Marcion had been living in the time of Jesus, and had propounded to our Lord his ideas, they would have been pronounced incom-

[1] "History of the Christian Church," Vol. I., p. 459.

[2] Ferris, 127 *seq.*

patible with the gospel that Christ proclaimed? Not with the violent language of Tertullian, we may be sure, but none the less decisively, Jesus would have declared his utter dissent from Marcion's teaching about God, and the corollaries drawn from that teaching.

But Marcion did not stop with his repudiation of the Old Testament; he also refused to accept a large part of the New. This was the necessary result of his taking Paul as the sole true representative of the gospel of Christ. A large part of the writings accepted as Scripture by the Catholic Church of the second century could not possibly be reconciled with the teaching and practice of the Marcionites. This rejection of the other apostolic writings was justified by an appeal to the attitude that Paul himself maintained to Peter and Barnabas, as the former himself describes it in Galatians (chap. 2). The Jewish training of the other apostles had led them to misunderstand, misinterpret, and misrepresent the real gospel. The writings of such men were so far astray that they could not be accepted as authoritative. The gospel as Christ proclaimed it and as Paul interpreted it, had been vitiated by interpolations made in the interest of those who

still held to the law, and a critical reconstruction was necessary even in the case of those documents that were to be accepted. And so Marcion revised boldly, not only the list of writings then current, but even the writings themselves, and gave out first a list and then a text that he and his followers were willing to accept as authentic and authoritative. At least, this is what the Fathers charge him with doing.

His list consisted, we are told, of two parts: the gospel, or *Evangelicon,* and the Pauline letters, or *Apostolicon.* His gospel seems to have been substantially the canonical Luke, with the omission of the first two chapters, and numerous smaller excisions and alterations, to make it suit his purpose better. Tertullian quotes so profusely from this alleged gospel of Marcion as to leave no serious doubt as to its character, and most modern scholars have no doubts. The Apostolicon is said to have consisted of the ten Epistles that bear the name of Paul, excluding the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, but including Philemon.[1]

[1] Westcott thinks that the charges of altering the text made against Marcion by Tertullian and Epiphanius are not borne out by the facts, at least in the case of the Epistles. The passages "which they cite from the Epistles are certainly insufficient to prove the point; and on the contrary they go far to show that Marcion preserved without alteration the text which he found in his manuscript. Of the seven

Tertullian[1] reproaches Marcion with inconsistency in thus including Philemon in his canon, while rejecting three others that were also addressed to individuals, which makes plain the grounds of Marcion's decision. His objection, that epistles addressed to individuals were not suited to edification of the church, was in fact shared by many who were perfectly orthodox, and such an objection did not at all imply doubt of the Pauline authorship of the writings.

Marcion was a contemporary of Justin and Polycarp. His proposed canon is a clearer testimony to the existing acceptance of the Provisional Canon than we find explicitly given by any orthodox Father of the period. The voice of heresy is louder than the voice of orthodoxy, but the two blend in perfect harmony. Tertullian perceived this implicit testimony of Marcion to the Canon of the Catholic Church, and was quick to take advantage of the controversial weapon thus made available. Chiding his antagonist for this

readings noticed by Epiphanius, only two are unsupported by other authority; and it is altogether unlikely that Marcion changed other passages, when, as Epiphanius himself shows, he left untouched those which are most directly opposed to his system" (p. 320). This shows how unsafe it is to accept without sifting the charges made by the Fathers against a heretic.

[1] *Adv. Marc.*, v. 21.

mutilation of Luke's text, on the thin pretext of eliminating interpolations—like certain critics of our times, Marcion regarded anything that could not be made to square with his theories as an "interpolation"—Tertullian says,[1] "so that while he amends he confirms . . . that our gospel is the prior one." And in a later passage he presses this argument again: "The Gospel of Luke, which we are defending with all our might, has stood its ground from its very first publication; whereas Marcion's Gospel is not known to most people, and to none whatever is it known without being at the same time condemned." [2]

The point was well taken. Nothing can be clearer than that Marcion's proposed canon logically implies the existence of a larger body of writings accepted by the Catholic Church. No other reason than the existence of such a body of accepted Christian Scriptures can possibly be assigned for his making a special canon of his own. A thing that is avowedly different, must have something from which to differ. We are not pressing our inferences too far, probably, when we see in Marcion's division of his canon into two parts, Evangelicon and Apostolicon, a recognition

[1] *Adv. Marc.*, iv. 4. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 5.

of the existence of two orthodox collections of Gospels and Epistles, such as we saw reason to believe did exist long before the close of the second century. And when Tertullian speaks of "the apostolic Instrument" [1] he cannot mean anything else than an orthodox collection similar to Marcion's Evangelicon.

It is perfectly true, as we have also seen, that in Marcion's day the Catholic Church had taken no steps to make a formal list of its accepted writings. There had been no need of such a list. Definitions are never found in the history of the Church until something makes a definition necessary. Marcion's attack on the canonicity of the writings of other apostles than Paul compelled the Church to defend those writings. The conflict with heretics led the Catholic Church first of all to that assertion of its exclusive right to the possession and interpretation of the Christian Scriptures, which we have found so prominent and so emphatic in Irenæus, and ultimately to decide what should and what should not be accepted as Scripture.

Some eminent critics, of whom Harnack is a shining example, have altogether missed the sig-

[1] *De Mod.*, 12.

nificance of Marcion and his canon. That distinguished German scholar will have it that the conflict with Marcion and the other heretics of the second century compelled the Catholic Church to make a Canon as a standard of orthodoxy. Now this is a flagrant case of putting the cart before the horse, so far at least as Marcion is concerned. He made his canon by the simple process of rejecting books that the Catholic Church already accepted. He affected the Catholic Canon only by provoking a more emphatic assertion of the authority of the books that he arbitrarily rejected. That the Catholic Church already had its Evangelicon, and that this consisted of our four Gospels, can hardly be said to be any longer an open question. That it had its Apostolicon, consisting of at least the thirteen Epistles of Paul, can no more be successfully questioned. That there never was any serious doubt of the canonicity of First John and First Peter is equally certain. We meet the first positive proofs of the acceptance of all these as a collection in Irenæus, perhaps, but that is because of the paucity of the literature for the generation preceding him. A time equal at least to a generation must be assumed for the growth of that precision and cer-

titude which mark the statements of Irenæus, especially his treatment of the four Gospels.

Yet more influential than the Marcionites in the development of the Canon was the movement known as Montanism. Though the historical occasion of this sect was the teaching of the Phrygian "prophet" whose name it bears, its real cause was the need of a protest against the growing corruptions and worldliness of the Church. It was, in short, the first attempt at a Protestant Reformation—but with this difference: Protestantism of the sixteenth century took its stand on the exclusive authority of the Scriptures; Protestantism of the second century chose the less tenable ground of personal inspiration as the basis of authority. The Montanists were in the right when they insisted on the importance of the higher spiritual life—a life begotten by the Spirit of God, sanctified by the same Spirit, and directed by the Spirit as an indwelling, enlightening and guiding power. They anticipated George Fox in maintaining the "inner light," and outdid Fox in their doctrine of prophecy.

Of Montanus himself we know very little, but it was generally believed that he had been a heathen priest prior to his conversion, probably

of the goddess Cybele. Phrygia was the center, in the second century, of the most fanatical and frenzied of the heathen cults, in which was found a large element of soothsaying and prophecy under the supposed inspiration of the gods. Montanus seems to have brought these heathen ideas and practices over into his new faith, merely giving them a Christian dress. The Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, was the point of contact, and Montanus had little difficulty in adapting it to his purpose. It is asserted that he proclaimed himself to be the Paraclete, and one Father goes so far as to represent him as saying, "I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete." [1] But this is a late authority, and is either an honest blunder or a slander.

Sober scholars of our day rather incline to the view that all such statements are misunderstandings, if not perversions, of the teaching of Montanus. Certainly he claimed to be inspired, and one of the sayings attributed to him with most probability is, "Behold, man is like a lyre, and I play on him like a plectrum." He is probably speaking, not in his own person, but of the Paraclete, and he says no more than the familiar il-

[1] Didymus *de Trinitate*, Migne's Latin Patrology, 39 : 984.

lustration of inspiration in the patristic literature. But whatever the teaching of Montanus, the idea accepted among his followers was that our Lord's promise of the Paraclete was to all believers, not to the apostles only, and that special divine inspiration and divine revelations did not cease with the apostolic age. Two of his disciples surpassed Montanus himself as prophets, in the estimation of his followers—Priscilla (or Prisca) and Maximilla, married women who left their husbands and devoted themselves to this work of prophesying. The few fragments of their sayings that have been preserved—they do not appear to have left any writings [1]—are by no means remarkable, and fail to account for the respect with which Tertullian quotes them.[2]

We cannot tell just how far Tertullian represents the Montanistic party in this respect, but he

[1] It is only fair to add that Hippolytus says the Montanists "have an infinity of books of these prophets whose words they neither examine by reason, nor give heed to those who can, but are carried away by their undiscriminating faith in them, thinking that they learn through their means something more than the law, the prophets, and the gospels." But the vehemence of Hippolytus throws much suspicion on his accuracy. That the followers of the prophets wrote down some sayings is all that we are warranted in inferring from any facts now known.

[2] In a number of passages Tertullian quotes Montanistic prophets, generally if not always women, usually without naming them. *De Resur, Carn.*, 11; *De Exhort. Cast.*, 10; *De Fuga.*, 9, 11; *Adv. Prax.* 8, 30.

at least contends that the revelations of these prophets were not intended to supersede Scripture, but to supplement it. And more than a little plausibility must be conceded to his arguing of this point:

> If Christ is always, and prior to all, equally truth is a thing sempiternal and ancient. . . It is not so much novelty as truth which convicts heresies. Whatever savors of opposition to truth, this will be heresy, even [if it be an] ancient custom. . . The rule of faith, indeed, is altogether one, alone irremovable and irreformable; the rule, to wit, of believing in one only God omnipotent, the Creator of the universe, and his Son, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised again the third day from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right [hand] of the Father, destined to come to judge quick and dead through the resurrection of the flesh as well as of the spirit. This law of faith being constant, the other succeeding points of discipline and conversation admit the "novelty" of correction, the grace of God, to wit, operating and advancing even to the end. For what kind of [supposition] is it, that while the devil is always operating and adding daily to the ingenuities of iniquity, the work of God should either have ceased, or else desisted from advancing? Whereas the reason why the Lord sent the Paraclete was, that, since human mediocrity was unable to take in all things at once, discipline should, little by little, be directed and ordained and carried on to perfection, by that Vicar of the Lord, the Holy Spirit. . . Nothing is without stages of growth; all things await their season. . . So too righteousness—for the God of righteousness and of creation is the same—was first in a rudimentary state,

having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced through the Law and the Prophets to infancy; from that stage it passed through the Gospel to the fervor of youth; now through the Paraclete it is settling into maturity.[1]

In another of his works, Tertullian makes the chief end of the new prophecy the interpretation of the Scriptures already given:[2]

Now, since it was "needful that there should be heresies, in order that they which are approved might be made manifest," since however these heresies would be unable to put on a bold front without some countenance from the Scriptures, it therefore is plain enough that the ancient Holy Writ has furnished them with sundry materials for their evil doctrine, which very materials indeed [so distorted] are refutable from the same Scriptures. It was fit and proper, therefore, that the Holy Ghost should no longer withhold the effusions of his gracious light upon these inspired writings, in order that they might be able to disseminate the seeds [of truth] with no admixture of heretical subtleties, and pluck out of it their tares. He has accordingly now dispersed all the perplexities of the past, and their self-chosen parables and allegories, by the open and perspicuous explanation of the entire mystery, through the new prophecy, which descends in copious streams from the Paràclete. If you will only draw water from his fountains, you will never thirst for other doctrine.

[1] This is a passage of exceeding interest, on account of this explicit statement by Tertullian of the *regula fidei*, or Rule of Faith, to which he makes so many references in his writings. It is the oldest recorded form of the Apostles' Creed (*De Virg. Veland.* 1). A larger form is given elsewhere by Tertullian (*De Praescr. Haer.* 13).

[2] *De Resur. Carn.*, 63.

These claims of the Montanistic prophets, and their acceptance and advocacy by a man so highly endowed by nature and so thoroughly trained in controversy as Tertullian, compelled the Catholic Church to weigh well both the claims themselves and the grounds on which they rested. There was no valid *a priori* reason for denying the possibility of continuous inspiration and revelation in the Church; nor could it be successfully maintained that this was any novelty in Christian doctrine. The earliest Christian documents, such as the Didache, show plainly that the prophetic gift was not supposed to cease with the apostles —or even the apostolate itself—for both "prophets" and "apostles" are distinctly recognized as still existing at the time of the compilation of that book. Whether these Montanistic "prophets" had a genuine gift of prophecy was a question of fact, rather than of doctrine. The practical test recommended by our Lord himself was therefore applied, and the tree was judged by its fruits. The extravagant claims made by the Montanists for the inspiration of their prophets did not commend themselves to Christian believers at large as well founded. The majority of Christians discovered in these

prophesyings little resemblance to the prophetic gift of the apostolic age, or to those endowments supposed to remain in the church in the sub-apostolic age. They saw rather in these frenzied utterances a likeness to the ecstatic orgasms that Christians had always ascribed to demonic or diabolic agency, instead of the Holy Spirit's influence.

It was most unfortunate for Montanism that its purpose of reformation should have become complicated with this assertion of the inspiration of "prophets" and the divine authority of their "revelations." On the main issue the Montanists were right, but our sympathies must go with the Catholic Church in the matter of these prophetic claims, and we cannot but rejoice that this idea of continuous prophecy was not established as the orthodox doctrine among Christians. It would have led infallibly to great confusion, if not to hopeless disorder. Much has been said, and said with great truth, of the errors that have been committed in the interpretation of the Scriptures by the learned scholars of the church. The present age is perfectly convinced that the greatest theologians of the past have failed to include all truth in their systems. Protestants at least see clearly

that there are great defects, misunderstandings, errors even, in the decrees of councils regarding the things that must be believed by all Christians. But does anybody suppose that the progress of Christian doctrine would have been more steady or stable, or that results more assured would have been reached, if, instead of being formulated by the sober doctors and churchmen of the ages, it had grown under the continuous "revelations" of neurotic women, like those in whom Tertullian believed so unquestionably? Or where should we be to-day if every generation had produced a Mrs. Eddy?

And yet the Catholics were by no means consistent in their opposition to the Montanistic idea. As it so often happened in the development of the Church, what was good in Montanism was decisively rejected, while the very evil that for a time had been successfully withstood was eventually assimilated. In the end the Catholic Church accepted as orthodox the idea of continual inspiration and revelation, differing from the Montanists only in the question as to where the inspiration is lodged. The Montanist said, In the individual believer; the Catholics maintained that the continuous inspiration was promised to the

whole Church, and therefore only when the whole Church speaks are men certain that the Holy Spirit has led the followers of Christ into the truth. After the Council of Nice, this doctrine was further specialized, and thenceforth it was maintained as orthodox doctrine that the voice of the Spirit is certainly heard only through an ecumenical council.

But in the second and third centuries the Catholic Church could not or would not, and at any rate did not, accept the Montanistic claim to superior spiritual insight. The Catholic view was that the faith had once for all been delivered to the saints. This gave an aspect of finality to the apostolic doctrine, and to the Canon in which that doctrine was embodied. Accordingly, in this contest with the Montanists, the idea of a closed Canon seems first to have risen to consciousness among Catholics. The statement of the doctrine seems clearly to be the result of the position in which the Catholic Church found itself. The most effective weapon against the Montanists and their claims was to put forth the counter-claim that inspiration of individuals ceased with the apostles, and that in the apostolic writings the Church had a definite body of truth committed to

it for preservation and defense, to which no additions could be made.[1]

Yet it should not be supposed that the Catholic Church newly invented this idea, simply because it was found to be a convenient controversial weapon. The truth is rather that the idea was already latent in the subconsciousness of Christians, and that the controversy merely had the effect of bringing about an earlier formal statement than would otherwise have occurred. Once stated, the exigencies of controversy led the Catholic party to lay great stress on it, and so make it a permanent part of the doctrine of the Church. But there can be little doubt, if any, that the earlier Fathers, from Ignatius down, would have been as ready as Irenæus to state the doctrine, had there been occasion to do so, and that they would have been as much shocked as the opponents of the Montanists by the claim that any post-apostolic writing should be put on the same plane of authority with the writings of the

[1] The last clause was the new and significant thing. As concerned the written documents, there was no real issue between Montanist and Catholic. But now the idea became fixed in Catholic circles that the apostles alone possessed full inspiration, and hence their writings alone were to be accepted as authoritative. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* iv. 21. 135 *cf.* Tertullian *De Exhort.* 4; *De Veland, Virg.*, 4; *De Resurrec.*, 24; *De Jejun.*, 15; *De Pud.*, 12; *De Monog.* 4.

apostles. From this time forward, then, apostolicity became the touchstone of canonicity—that is to say, not the only test, but by all means the most important test, to which all writings were subjected. The further development of this idea belongs, however, to a later chapter.

Another peculiarity of the Montanists had an important effect on the development of the Canon, namely, their chiliastic ideas, not indeed introduced by them, but by the third century so identified with them as to become a distinct feature of their teaching. Chiliasm had been latent in the early church, and often appears in the writings of the second century, but the church had rather tolerated than approved it, and it had never before been propagated by a party. The Epistle of Barnabas (chap. 15) reasons that since "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years," God will finish everything and bring the world to an end in six days, or six thousand years from the creation, when he will rest a day, another thousand years, the millennial Sabbath. This will be followed by an eighth day, the eternal Sabbath, as a type of which Christians observe the Lord's Day. Irenæus [1] repeats the same idea, at greater length.

[1] *Contr. Haer.*, v. 32-35.

Eusebius quotes Papias as saying "that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth." But Eusebius[1] criticizes Papias as "not perceiving that the things said by them, the apostles, were spoken mystically in figures."

But of all the early Christian writers, perhaps Justin[2] was the most explicit in his statement of the chiliastic notion. In avowing his opinion he says expressly that "many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise." He goes on to say:

> But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. [But Justin does not say this will occur *at once*, which was the Montanistic idea.] . . . And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.

[1] H. E., iii. 39. [2] *Dial. c. Try.*, 80.

The Montanists, therefore, differed from their predecessors mainly in the clearness and precision of their views regarding the speedy coming of the Lord. If we may trust Epiphanius[1] and other Fathers, one of their prophets (Priscilla?) testified that the Lord had appeared to her and revealed the very place where the parousia would occur, and the exact site of the New Jerusalem. This was the little town of Pepuza, in Phrygia. Such pretended "revelations" were, rightly or wrongly, held responsible by the Catholic party for much of the fanaticism and disorder that they charged upon the Montanists, and with the rejection of these the Church began to look with disfavor on all chiliastic notions.

On the other hand, the Montanists appealed confidently to Scripture in confirmation of their views, as chiliasts have continued to do until this day. The most sober statement of the doctrine is that of Tertullian:[2]

> But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely built city of Jerusalem, "let down from heaven," which the apostle also calls "our mother from above"; and while

[1] *Haer.*, 49. 1. [2] *Adv. Marc.*, iii. 25.

declaring that our πολιτεύμα, or citizenship, is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and the Apostle John beheld. And the word of the new prophecy which is part of our belief, attests how it foretold how there would be for a sign a picture of this very city exhibited to view previous to its manifestation. This prophecy, indeed, has been very lately fulfilled in an expedition to the East. For it is evident from the testimony of even heathen witnesses, that in Judea there was suspended in the sky a city early every morning for forty days. As the day advanced the entire figure of its walls would wane gradually, and sometimes it would vanish instantly.

It is evident from this and numerous other passages that the Montanists accepted and used the same Scriptures that were honored in the Catholic Church. In a single treatise, "Concerning Flight in Persecution," Tertullian [1] quotes from nearly the whole Provisional Canon; and in the table of quotations appended to his writings in the "Ante-Nicene Fathers" may be found citations from almost every chapter of that Canon. Also he quotes from Hebrews, James, and Peter, books that had not yet been so generally accepted.

[1] It would lead us too far afield to discuss here the interesting question of the source of Tertullian's quotations. Though a good Greek scholar, and familiar with the Septuagint, presumably therefore able to quote from the original New Testament writings had he chosen, he apparently uses an old Latin version, made during the second century, one of those that Jerome afterward revised in his preparation of the Vulgate (see Reuss., p. 111).

But of all the New Testament books, none was so frequently or confidently cited by the Montanists as the Apocalypse, especially the passage 20 : 1-6. They set the fashion of a wrong exegesis of this famous passage that has prevailed to our own day. Carefully examined and fairly interpreted, it will be seen that this vision of John concerns only the saints who have suffered as witnesses of Christ in the great persecution of the beast, not a resurrection of all the righteous dead at the end of the world, as the Montanists asserted and as so many exegetes have continued to maintain. As for the "thousand years," the symbolical use of numbers throughout the Apocalypse forbids us to interpret this literally. But instead of proposing a better exegesis of the Apocalypse, in the place of the faulty Montanistic interpretation, the Catholic party found it much easier to raise doubts concerning the canonicity of the book, and even its apostolic origin. On this account the Apocalypse was everywhere less esteemed for a time than would otherwise have been the case, and we find a tendency in the East, especially, not only during the height of the Montanistic controversy, but for a long time afterward, to drop this book from the Canon.

Eusebius[1] quotes Dionysius the Great (about 250) against the book, which the latter says many ascribe to Cerinthus, who was carnal in nature and so imagined the kingdom of Christ to be an earthly one. Dionysius remarks: "That this is the work of one John I do not deny, and I agree that it is also the work of a holy and inspired man. But I cannot readily admit that he was the apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, by whom the Gospel of John and the Catholic Epistle[2] were written. . . But I think he was some other one of those in Asia, as they say that there are two monuments in Ephesus, each bearing the name of John." The bishop goes on to discuss the style of the Gospel and Epistle as compared with that of the Apocalypse, quite in the manner of a modern critic, but he does not fail to make it clear that these critical doubts were first suggested by the content of John's revelations and the encouragement that they gave to chiliasm.

Cyril of Jerusalem, a little later omits the Apocalypse from the list of canonical books given

[1] H. E., vii. 25.

[2] The use of the singular number here is significant. It shows that in the middle of the third century only the First Epistle of John was canonical in the East.

in his lectures to catechumens,[1] and even forbids the reading of it: "But let the rest be put aside in a secondary rank. And whatever books are not read in churches, these read not even by thyself, as thou has heard me say." But, of course, what was forbidden to catechumens should not be regarded as forbidden to more mature Christians, though the effect of such injunctions would certainly be to discourage the reading of the Apocalypse by any.

In this attitude of suspicion and discouragement toward this book, Cyril and Dionysius fairly represent the whole Eastern Church of the third century. The Apocalypse is omitted from the Peshito version, of which more will be said in a later chapter. Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret, foremost among the Greek Fathers of this period, while they do not definitely reject the book, refrain from quoting it as Scripture in any of their extant writings. Its place as the last book in all the early MSS and versions that contain it—a place that it still holds in our New Testament—mutely witnesses to the fact of its late reception into the Canon. It is the one instance of a book that was first accepted, then doubted, and finally

[1] iv. 36.

received as authoritative by the whole church. But not until the time of Athanasius does the East appear to have made up its mind definitely in favor of its acceptance.[1]

In the West, where Montanism existed for a time, but was never formidable, the Apocalypse continued to be highly esteemed. We learn from Eusebius that Gaius, a Roman presbyter early in the third century, a contemporary of Tertullian, agreed with certain heretics in ascribing the Apocalypse to Cerinthus, but the West was practically unanimous in its allegiance to the book. It seems fairly evident too, that to this stanch allegiance of the West we owe the final acceptance of the book and its place in the Canon.

Our estimate of the influence of heresy on the Canon would not be complete without at least a

[1] It is a remarkable fact that while the Apocalypse was one of the earliest books to be received, it was the last to be persistently doubted. It is quoted in the letter of the churches of Lyons and Vienne, which cited Rev. 22 : 11 with the words, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (Eusebius, H. E., v. 59). Melito of Sardis wrote a commentary on this book about A. D. 170 (Eusebius, H. E., iv. 29), the first book of the New Testament to be so honored. Hippolytus quotes at length chap. 17, 18, and ascribes the book to "blessed John, apostle and disciple of the Lord" (ANF 5 : 211). It is found in the old Latin version, as far back as we can trace it. On the other hand, Anastasius, patriarch of Antioch, gives a canonical list as late as 599, in which the Apocalypse is not mentioned, even among twenty-five apocryphal books outside of the Canon.

glance at several other heresies of the second century, less influential than the two that we have been considering, but nevertheless not to be overlooked. The first of these were the Alogi, about whom Hug has sarcastically remarked that hitherto the less scholars have known about them the more they have written. Nearly all that anybody really knows of this sect is that Epiphanius invented the name to describe certain heretics, about 170, who agreed neither with Cerinthus nor the Montanists, but rejected the Gospel and Epistle of John on account of the doctrine of the Logos contained in them. According to Epiphanius[1] they also objected to the Apocalypse, on the ground that it was valueless; he represents them as saying, "What value has the Apocalypse of John for me, speaking as it does of seven angels and seven trumpets." It is highly probable that Irenæus refers to the same party, and the Gaius mentioned above is thought to have belonged to them. The heretics whom Irenæus describes, without naming them, rejected both the Gospel of John and the Spirit of prophecy. The Alogi not only rejected the Johannine writings but, like Gaius, ascribed their authorship to Cerinthus.

[1] *C. Haer.*, iii. 11. 9.

Inasmuch as Cerinthus was a Docetist, utterly opposed to John's doctrine, and so much disapproved by the apostle that tradition represents him as rushing out of a bath into which the heretic had entered, rather than remain under the same roof with such a false teacher, no less probable author of these writings could well have been assigned.[1] It is much as if a writer of our day were to assert that the Declaration of Independence was not really composed by Thomas Jefferson but by Benedict Arnold.

It will be seen, therefore, that the fact of their rejection of John's writings is the only definite thing known about the Alogi, and whether they were few or many we can only conjecture. That there was such a party or sect in the last quarter of the second century is additional testimony to the general acceptance of the fourth Gospel and other Johannine writings at that time, and for at least a generation previous, while this heretical attack on the authority of these writings led the Church to a more emphatic assertion of their authenticity, inspiration, and authority.

The Encratites, of whom we learn from Irenæus and other Fathers, were a sect who pushed

[1] Westcott, 254.

asceticism to what was considered a heretical extreme. According to Eusebius,[1] they received the Gospels, but rejected the Pauline Epistles and the Acts, thus very nearly reversing the position of the Marcionites. Some of them at least received the Old Testament. Eusebius, following Irenæus, credits the origin of the sect to Tatian, and it seems at least certain that Tatian joined them. What they probably could not accept in the Pauline Epistles was the doctrine of Christian liberty there set forth, which was of course irreconcilable with their teaching of extreme and compulsory asceticism.

We have now heard all that the voice of heresy has to tell us regarding the progress of the Canon. It would be easy to exaggerate its importance—some have exaggerated it. Heresy was chiefly a stimulus that hastened a growth already begun—in a single instance, a handicap that retarded progress. The necessity of defending what had come to be accepted as the Catholic faith, the orthodox belief, and of finding for it a basis of generally recognized authority, apart from mere tradition, developed in the Church a consciousness of the value of the Scriptures more speedily

[1] H. E., iv. 29, 5.

than would otherwise have been produced. Heresy did not cause any new development, or give rise to any new doctrine. It was like the foreign body introduced into a saturated solution, which instantly becomes the center of crystalization. The ideas about the Canon were already in the Church, suspended in solution, so to speak; all that was needed was an adequate occasion to induce the Church to define these ideas with precision. Heresy furnished that occasion, and in that manner and to that extent, and thus alone, it became an important historical factor in the formation of the Canon.

V

THE "PROVISIONAL" CANON

V

DURING the last three decades of the second century, it is plain that there had come to be a general understanding in the Catholic churches that twenty books of our present Canon were to be accepted as Scripture and publicly read in Christian worship: the four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of Paul, First Peter, and First John. Irenæus, as we have seen, quotes all of these, and in such a way as clearly to imply that for some time they had held unquestioned the place of authority that he ascribes to them—probably for a generation at least. Though certain heretics had questioned some of these twenty books, there had never been any doubts in the Catholic Church about their authenticity or authority. We have earlier and stronger evidence of the acceptance of some than we have of others, but not a particle of evidence against the canonicity of any. Just as rapidly as they became known throughout the church they seem to have been accepted.

There were other books at this time recognized

as of actual or virtual apostolic authorship. Many believed these to be inspired, some churches read them, and eventually some of them became canonical; but down to the year 200 they were not so generally received as Scripture as to be entitled to canonical rank. There were also in circulation books, not a few, that were generally believed not to be Scripture, though some of them bore the names of apostles. Irenæus [1] speaks of the "unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings of the Marcosians," and these terms (*ἀπόκρυφα*, *νόθα*) were thenceforth used to describe uncanonical writings.

There is little need to multiply proofs of the above statements. In the first place, sufficient evidence has been furnished in previous chapters, cited there for a different purpose, which it would be superfluous to repeat. In the second place, proofs are needless because the facts are generally admitted. Scholars of all schools admit that with Irenæus we have a Canon, in the sense of a definite number of books everywhere received. Harnack is inclined, however, to lay stress on a certain feature of the age of Irenæus. It is the age that witnesses the definite establishment of

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, i. 20. 1.

the Catholic Church. The churches scattered throughout the Roman empire have awakened to self-consciousness and a sense of solidarity pervades them. To justify this unity of faith and practice a definite body of apostolic literature has become a necessity; hence a Canon "suddenly" [1] appears with Irenæus.

This is doubtless a rational account of the facts in all but the assertion of suddenness. The appearance of the Canon is sudden only to a reader of the Fathers, and to him only in the sense that there is a gap of about a generation between Justin and Irenæus, which is practically unfilled by any surviving literature. In this interval we are entitled to assume the continuance of the process that we have seen clearly beginning in the first half of the second century. When we arrive at Irenæus we see the point of development reached without having seen the process. The impression of suddenness is thus wholly due to our ignorance of what happened, and has no objective reality.

This clearly appears when we consider the attitude of Irenæus to the four Gospels. He makes

[1] "*Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200*," p. 110; "History of Dogma," II., 43.

the acceptance of these books—no more, no fewer —a final test of orthodoxy. But everything that we have discovered in our previous investigation is a preparation for just that attitude toward the Gospels; and no reader of Justin, for example, has any reason to be surprised by what he finds in Irenæus. Tatian's Diatessaron, composed about 170, is an incontrovertible evidence of the reception of all four Gospels as early as the youth of Irenæus. A fragment from the writings of Apollinaris of Hierapolis confirms this testimony, if it needed confirmation. Speaking of the celebration of Easter, he says: "Some say that the Lord ate the lamb with his disciples on the fourteenth [of Nisan], and suffered himself on the great day of unleavened bread; and they state that Matthew's narrative is in accordance with their view; while it follows that their view is at variance with the law, and according to them the Gospels seem to disagree." The Gospels are here spoken of as a definite collection of books, well known and generally recognized; and, of course, the only Gospel that seems to disagree with Matthew's about the time of our Lord's supper with his disciples is John's. So fixed is this notion of four Gospels from this time

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onward, that we are able to make it a sort of chronological landmark, by which we may decide the date of other writings. For example, when we find the so-called second Epistle of Clement quoting from the Gospel according to the Egyptians as if it were canonical, we can safely infer that this homily is earlier than the time of Irenæus.[1]

One thing should be noted before we pass from Irenæus to the other testimonies of this period. This Father was in youth a pupil of Polycarp, who had in turn been taught by the Apostle John. Inasmuch as Polycarp suffered in 155, according to the best reckoning, at the age of eighty-six, he must have been born about A. D. 69. These two lives spanned nearly the entire history of Christianity to the close of the second century. There must have been many such cases.[2] Yet we are asked to accept as a probable hypothesis this: that a lot of forged

[1] We have in Origen's "Commentary on Luke" an interesting confirmation of the second century testimonies: "As in the Old Testament the charisma of distinguishing between spirits prevailed, so now in the New Covenant many have desired to write the Gospels, but the 'good bankers' have not accepted all, but have chosen some from among them. . . The Church of God gives preference to four only."

[2] For an impressive calculation of the possibilities of tradition during the second century, see Gregory on the Canon, pp. 159-162.

writings were successfully foisted on the churches of the second century, in spite of the presence in them of many intelligent men who had every opportunity to learn the truth about these writings and every motive to do so. This is to demand that we believe a greater miracle than any recorded in the Scriptures, which the same scholars who propound this hypothesis as one man reject.

This collection of twenty books may be very properly called the " Provisional " Canon, on condition that we do not permit that name to connote the idea that the Church was, as yet, consciously engaged in the process of forming a Canon. That idea did not clearly emerge into the consciousness of Christendom until long after the time of Irenæus. Nor must we permit this name to connote the equally erroneous idea that no other books were at this time received as Scripture. At the risk of wearisome repetition, it must be said again that there were a considerable number of such books received by some and rejected by others, some of which were afterward admitted into the Canon, while others were ultimately rejected. The story of that sifting process will be told in subsequent chapters. For our present purposes we call by the title of the Provisional Canon only

those books about which there was never any serious question among Christians—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*

And yet, even here a slight qualification should be made. The Provisional Canon was probably not precisely alike in both East and West. There were two forms: in the East the twenty books included First Peter and excluded Revelation; in the West just the reverse was the case—First Peter was not generally accepted while Revelation was. On this point Tertullian and the Muratorian Fragment agree, as we shall see when we examine their testimony in detail. With this slight variation recognized, we shall find competent testimony to this Canon from all parts of the Roman empire—from Gaul, from Italy, from Africa, from Alexandria, and the East.

We have already had the testimony from Gaul —that of Irenæus—let us next consider that from the further extremity of the empire, Alexandria, since it is of the same date. Clement[1] (165-220) in his exposition of the principle that Scripture is the criterion by which truth and heresy are distinguishable, says: "For we have, as the source of teaching, the Lord, both by the prophets, the

[1] *Strom.*, vii. 16.

Gospel, and the blessed apostles, 'in divers manners and at sundry times' leading from the beginning of knowledge to the end." Clement quotes so profusely from our four Gospels that it would be almost possible to reconstruct entire chapters from his writings. The same is true of the Pauline Epistles. That he recognized four Gospels and no more as canonical, though he may have occasionally quoted from others, is proved by the following passage from his "Hypotyposes," preserved by Eusebius,[1] who says:

> Again, in the same books, Clement has set down a tradition which he had received from the elders before him, in regard to the order of the Gospels, to the following effect. He says that the Gospels containing the genealogies were written first, and that the Gospel according to Mark was composed in the following circumstances: "Peter having preached the word publicly at Rome, and by the Spirit proclaimed the gospel, those who were present, who were numerous, entreated Mark, inasmuch as he had attended him from an early period, and remembered what had been said, to write down what had been spoken. On his composing the Gospel, he handed it to those who had made the request to him; which coming to Peter's knowledge, he neither hindered nor encouraged. But John, the last of all, seeing that what was corporeal was set forth in the Gospels, on the entreaty of his intimate friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."

[1] H. E., vi. 14.

That Clement received also First Peter is clearly evident from more than a score of quotations that he makes from it, while from First John he quotes a dozen times—in every case manifestly treating both books as Scripture. There can be hardly a doubt that he also recognized as canonical more than the books of the Provisional Canon—at least Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

Harnack,[1] however, will not admit that Clement speaks for the Alexandrine Church. This insistence that when an Eastern writer speaks, he speaks for himself alone, agrees badly with the assumption that whenever a Western writer speaks he speaks for the Roman Church. Such unfair treatment of testimony is not deliberate, of course, but it is nevertheless quite characteristic of the mental operations of a certain historical school, and vitiates not a few of their conclusions. There is no good reason assignable for refusing to regard Clement as fairly representative of the Alexandrine opinions of his time, the closing decades of the second century.

That other parts of the East substantially agreed with Alexandria we have testimony, not

[1] Dogma, II., 59, 60.

so complete as might be desired, but unmistakable in its character. Theophilus of Antioch composed a treatise in three books, dedicated to a friend named Autolycus, whom he endeavored to convince of the truth of Christianity. He is speaking of the origin of Christ: "And hence the holy writings teach us, and all the Spirit-bearing men, one of whom, John, says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.'" This is the first instance now extant of the quotation of the fourth Gospel accompanied by the author's name. And, of course, if the fourth Gospel was accepted by Theophilus,[1] there can be no doubt about the other three, especially as he also quotes from Matthew. Elsewhere Theophilus gives evidence of knowing and using as Scripture eight of the Pauline Epistles, which necessarily implies like knowledge of the rest, and he quotes from Acts and First Peter. The only book of the Provisional Canon that can be said not to be positively attested by his writings is First John, and there is a dubious reference to 1 John 2 : 20 in his saying, "Wherefore we are called Christians on this account, because we are anointed with the oil of God."[2] Like

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[1] iii. 13. [2] i. 12.

evidences of the acceptance of the same books is found in the writings of Athenagoras, an Athenian philosopher, belonging to about the same date.

Tertullian, in time the last of the witnesses to the Provisional Canon, is by far the most precise and convincing in his testimony. His treatise "Against Marcion" was written in or about the year 207. After insisting on the authority of Luke's Gospel, as shown by the fact of its acceptance in the apostolic churches from its publication, he goes on to say:[1] "The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means—I mean the Gospels of John and Matthew—whilst that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was. For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works that disciples publish belong to their masters." This is decisive as to the four Gospels, which he calls as a collection[2] the "evangelical Instrument." His acceptance of the Acts is made equally decisive by an elaborate comparison of that book with Paul's

[1] iv. 2. [2] iv. 5.

Epistle to the Galatians.[1] In the same treatise he recognizes distinctly thirteen Epistles of Paul, and makes it a reproach to Marcion that the latter has not only mutilated their text but their number, by rejecting the letters to Timothy and Titus.[2] The First Epistle of John (4 : 1-3) he quotes emphatically and by name, with a long discussion of the Antichrist. Indeed, First Peter is the only book that Tertullian[3] does not give an emphatic attestation by name. This he clearly quotes but once, and in a writing of doubtful genuineness.

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Tertullian also marks the giving of a definite name to the Canon, which it has ever since borne. The early Fathers give no specific name to the collection of apostolic books that they recognized as Scripture. Theophilus of Antioch calls them "the holy Scriptures," the "divine word." Clement of Alexandria alludes to them as "the Lord's Scriptures," "the divine Scriptures," the "holy books." Even so late as the time of Origen no name was established in the East, and his favorite formula is "the sacred books." The first use of the name that was finally adopted by the whole church belongs to the closing years of

[1] v. 2, 3. [2] v. 21. [3] *Scorpiace*, 12.

the second century and to the writings of Clement:[1] "For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and New Testaments" (*τῆς τε διαθήκης τῆς παλαίας καὶ τῆς νέας*). The context leaves little room for reasonable doubt that the allusion is to the written Covenants, the sacred books received as authoritative. And if there should be any who doubt this, Clement's reference elsewhere to "the commandments according to both Old and New Testaments"[2] removes all possibility of questioning his meaning.

The definite acceptance of this term in the West —or rather, its Latin equivalent—was perhaps earlier than in the East. Tertullian is an unimpeachable witness to its use in Africa, at least. He protests against Marcion's attempt to set up two gods, "one for each Instrument, or Testament, *as it is more usual to call it.*"[3] Both words were in use in Roman law, the one meaning a written contract (sometimes a public document), and so being the more exact rendering of the Greek *διαθήκη*, the other meaning a will. In his treatise "Against Praxeas,"[4] Tertullian says: "If I fail in resolving this article by disputable

[1] *Strom.*, i. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 1. [3] iv. 1. [4] c. 15.

passages of the Old Testament, I will take out of the New Testament (*de Novo Testamento*) a confirmation of our view." [1] And he speaks repeatedly of "both Testaments." [2]

We have reserved to the last, for more careful examination, the testimony to the Provisional Canon from Italy—a list of received apostolic writings contemporary with Irenæus, or possibly a little earlier. Ludovico Muratori, a distinguished Italian scholar, discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan a manuscript of the seventh or eighth century, the history of which can be traced back to the great monastery at Bobbio, founded by Columban. He found among its contents some excerpts from the Fathers, including a list of the New Testament books, and published this list in his great work on Italian Antiquities, in 1740. It has been known since that time as the Muratorian Fragment or the Muratorian Canon. In its present form it is undoubtedly of Italian origin, and therefore becomes a competent witness for our purpose.

Besides being a fragment, mutilated at both

[1] c. 20; *De Pud.*, 1.

[2] *Novum Testamentum* is also used by Tertullian in the sense of the New Covenant, *i. e.*, the Christian dispensation (*Adv. Prax.*, 31; *Adv. Mar.*, iv. 22). The context always makes it possible to decide when he refers to the written Covenant.

ends, this document is written in barbarous Latin, and the copyist has disfigured the manuscript with many careless and gratuitous blunders. This makes the text as it stands unintelligible in many places and nonsensical in others, so that much conjectural emendation is necessitated in order to get from it connected and sensible sentences. Many scholars have tried their hands at this task in turn, until something like a received text has been evolved. This document is of so great importance, and is so characteristic of the age from which it has descended to us, that it has been given in full, as the first document of the Appendix, in the best English dress practicable.

Before examining its testimony to the Provisional Canon, there is at least one question to be considered. Can we fix approximately its date? There is a reference to the Roman episcopate of Pius as having been "very recently, in our times," that seems to make this possible. Unfortunately, however, there is very great uncertainty as to this same Pius. Some would put the close of his episcopate as early as 142, while others would place it as late as 157. The latter date is now regarded as the more probable, and it thus becomes evident that the date of the list cannot well be earlier than

160, while it may be as late as 200. The year 180 may be taken as a reasonable mean.

The list of books given is peculiar in several particulars. The four Gospels are first recognized; this cannot be doubted after one reads the incomplete opening sentence, and the later allusion to John's as the fourth Gospel. Then follow the Acts, and thirteen Epistles of Paul, in this curious order: Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, First and Second Timothy; after which come Jude, "two of John," and the Apocalypses of John and Peter, at least the latter being recognized as of doubtful canonicity. The Book of Wisdom is mentioned before the Apocalypses, showing the uncertainty at this date concerning the Old Testament Canon to be quite as great as that regarding the New. Hebrews, James, and Third John are not mentioned, and are therefore excluded; but this is what we might expect. What is a little surprising is the inclusion of Jude and the omission of any mention of First Peter. This omission is quite inexplicable, except on the theory of an accidental oversight on the part of the scribe, and several ingenious emendations have been proposed; but none of these explanations is convincing.

What was the object of this list? The same MS. from which it is taken gives, immediately after it, a fragment from a treatise of Ambrose, and an equally fragmentary translation from a work of Chrysostom is contained in it. From internal evidence we might say with some confidence that we have here the commonplace book of some monk, who copied out from the writings of the Fathers brief extracts that had struck his fancy. This list can hardly be an official document, even though Holtzmann does say so confidently that it is "a list of canonical books of the Roman Church." [1] Rather, the unknown writer seems attempting to state the traditions of the churches regarding the origin of the canonical writings, and to give a list of those accepted in the churches with which he is acquainted. Accordingly, Muratori attributed it to Gaius, on the ground of a statement by Eusebius that Gaius had left a list of the genuine apostolic writings. Bunsen thought it an ill-translated excerpt from a work of Hegesippus.

The internal evidence of the Fragment itself makes sufficiently plain the purpose of the un-

[1] *Ein Kanonverzeichniss der römischen Kirche.* "Introduction," p. 125.

known writer. As in the writings of Irenæus, the test of canonicity is public reading in the churches —what writings are so read, what writings are fitted for such reading. The matter is thus looked at primarily from a liturgical point of view, not the historical or dogmatic, though historical and dogmatic considerations are appealed to as reasons for the decision pro or con in the case of certain books. The dogmatic bias is apparent in the saying that "it is not fitting to mix gall and honey." The historical element appears in the care taken to establish the apostolicity of the accepted writings, and to make it clear that John, in particular, was an eye-witness.

When we examine the Fragment sentence by sentence, we find a score of phrases that seem to be Greek idioms, rather than Latin. This has led most critics to infer that we have here a translation from a Greek original.[1] If that is admitted to

[1] Westcott, usually cautious, thinks "there can be little doubt that it is a version from the Greek," and later more positively declares that the "recurrence of Greek idioms appears conclusive to the fact that it is a translation" (pp. 214, 217). On the other hand, Reuss says: "The language, the rejection of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or at least the silence observed regarding it, everything down to the mention of the city of Rome and its bishop, betrays a Latin and probably African pen" (p. 102). Reuss thinks *fel cum melle*, a pun, which "seems of itself to prove that we possess the document in the original and not as a translation from the Greek" (p. 100, note).

be the case, an Eastern origin of the list is naturally suggested, and certainly the burden of proof is thrown upon those who maintain that the document originated in the West. The opinion of most scholars inclines, in spite of this natural presumption, toward a Western origin, but it must be admitted that much of their reasoning is inconclusive and some of it extraordinary.

Some very incautious assertions have been made in order to weaken the presumption of an Eastern origin. Westcott, usually conservative almost to a fault, says that "Greek continued to be even at a later period, the ordinary language of the Roman church";[1] and Doctor Gregory[2] goes even further in asserting that "Greek continued to be the Christian literary language at Rome until well into the third century." Westcott and Gregory are scholars unsurpassed in learning, but how can any man of this age, however learned, know what was the language of the Roman church of the second century, when there is not a line surviving in any language that can be positively traced to that church in the second century?

The poverty stricken condition of the Roman

[1] "Canon," p. 214. [2] "Canon," p. 120.

church of the first three centuries is not realized by those who have not looked into the matter. During all this time it did not produce a single great man, and no writings of any account have come down to us. The letter of Clement of Rome to the church of Corinth belongs to the first century, not the second. But, not to take advantage of a mere technicality, what may be inferred from the fact that Clement's letter is written in Greek? Why, merely this: that Clement was able to write in Greek, or that he had an amanuensis who could, and, as he was writing to a Greek-speaking church, that would not be able to understand a letter in Latin, he used Greek. Nothing more than this may be inferred. The letter has no bearing on the question of what language was ordinarily spoken or written by the members of the Roman church in Clement's time.

Consider the matter from another point of view. The fact that Clement wrote in Greek can no more be cited as proof that Greek was the language of the Roman church, than the fact that Irenæus also wrote in Greek can be said to prove that the language of the church of Lyons was Greek. A Greek-speaking church in the Gaul of the second century! The use of Greek by Ire-

næus is sufficiently accounted for by the well-known fact that he was a native of Smyrna and Greek was his mother tongue. If we knew more about Clement we might find as satisfactory an explanation of his knowledge of Greek.

Hegesippus (d. 180), who is often carelessly called a Roman writer, gives no help to the Westcott-Gregory hypothesis. He certainly visited Rome, but he was as certainly a native of the East, and there is no proof that he had any connection with the Roman church. Jerome[1] plainly understood, from the information accessible to him, that Hegesippus was only a sojourner in Rome. Nothing therefore can be argued from his writing in Greek as to the language of the Roman church.

No inference can be drawn from the writings of Gaius that will strengthen the hypothesis. It is not certain that he was a presbyter or bishop or even a member of the church at Rome, though these things are often asserted. The earliest statement to that effect is not trustworthy, as it belongs to the ninth century, being found in a work of Photius of Constantinople (d. 891). The one fact that we know about him, on the authority of

[1] *De vir. Ill.*, c. xxii.

Eusebius,[1] is that he wrote a "Dialogue with Proclus," an account of his disputation with a heretic of that name in Rome, in the episcopate of Zephyrinus (201-219). The fragments of that writing that have been preserved are in Greek, but it is not certain that this was the original language. If it were, in spite of his apparently Roman name, Gaius may have been of Eastern origin—a guess that finds confirmation in one or two references to him in patristic literature. Nobody can say—or, rather, since some scholars have shown themselves capable of saying anything, nobody *should* say—even if it were established that Gaius was a member of the Roman church and wrote in Greek, that Greek is thereby proved to have been the language of the church. The fallacy of such an inference is one of which any tyro in logic should be ashamed.

Nor does the fact that the Shepherd was written in Greek, and is said to have been written by the brother of a Roman bishop, prove that Greek was the language of the Roman church. It does not even tend to prove such a hypothesis, if we consider the character of the Shepherd. The book was composed, as its character makes

[1] H. E., ii. 25. 6.

clear, for the East, where Montanism was raging, not for the West where it was not at all dangerous. The author understood Greek and wrote in that language, as best adapted to procure the circulation of his book where it was needed. As a matter of fact, it was principally circulated in the East, because only there could it be widely read. Any one can easily satisfy himself how anti-Montanistic the Shepherd is, and appreciate the force of what has been said.

A parallel case will make the matter plainer. The late Dr. George B. Taylor wrote a book on Italy while he was a pastor of a Baptist church in Rome, and wrote it in English for readers in America, but the language of his church is Italian, though there are a number of people in it who speak good English. Does not this show how rash is the inference that some would draw from the language of the Shepherd? Though it was written in Rome, and by one who may have been a member of the Roman church, no connection of the writing with the church can be shown, and in the absence of proof no one is entitled to call this a document of the Roman church, or cite it as evidence that Greek was the language of that church in the second century.

It ought not even to be asserted that Greek was the language of the Roman church in the apostolic age. Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in Greek it is true, but this may have been because he was unable to write in Latin; and he knew that there were in the church enough Hellenistic Jews to interpret the letter to Latin-speaking brethren.[1] It is more than doubtful if this were true in the days of Clement. The closing chapters of the Acts indicate that from the coming of Paul to Rome the church received its chief additions from the Gentiles. The mention of converts even among Cæsar's household (Phil. 4 : 22) in one of the Epistles of the captivity, shows that Romans, even those of high station, were added to the church. That Greek continued after the apostolic age to be the language of the church, if it had ever been such, is a proposition so contrary to all that we might fairly expect as to be receivable only upon positive proof.

Not only is there no proof available, but such

[1] Rome, as a cosmopolitan city, would have many Greeks among its citizens in the second century, and it is possible that a few such might be found in the Roman church. But how far this possibility is from warranting a conclusion that Greek was the official or literary language of the church needs no argument to convince any sober-minded reader.

evidence as is extant warrants rather the belief that Greek was never the language, literary or other, of Rome, Christian or heathen, in any other sense than that in which French is the language of Rome to-day. Practically every educated Roman, and every one engaged in any sort of business, speaks French. French books are published in Rome. For "French" substitute "Greek," and Rome in the second century is described. The utmost that the known facts and plausible hypotheses will allow to be said, therefore, is this: the circumstance that a document of the second century is written in Greek does not exclude the possibility that it might have been composed in Rome or somewhere in Italy. After the fourth century a Western origin of a Greek document would be an impossibility, unless it could be shown by good external evidence that it was composed by a Greek temporarily dwelling in Italy.

When we look for positive evidence in favor of a Western origin of the Fragment, we find nothing but this sentence in the document itself: "The Shepherd moreover Hermas very recently wrote in the city of Rome, in our own times, while his brother Pius was occupying the chair

of the Roman church." That is what some great scholars call proof! It does not require scholarship to test such reasoning. Let any reader of average common sense weigh the matter for himself, as he is perfectly competent to do. Let us take a parallel case from our own day. Suppose the reader should see in a book or newspaper this sentence: "The 'Letters of a Merchant to His Son' were written in Boston by George Horace Lorimer, while his father was pastor of Tremont Temple." (As a matter of fact, they were written in Louisville, but the above sentence makes the parallel complete, and accuracy of fact is not material.) Would anybody reading that sentence dream of inferring that the newspaper or book in which it occurred was itself written or published in Boston? The sentence would suggest only that it was written by somebody who was familiar with the facts, and that might be anybody anywhere in the United States. So this remark in the Fragment about the composition of the Shepherd might be taken to imply that its author lived somewhere in Italy, were it not for the fact that the prominence of the church of Rome and the intercourse between the Christian churches of the second cen-

tury, would very likely make such facts as these known as well in the East as in Italy. We must beware of reading later history into the second century, and assuming as then existing that mutual ignorance of each other which did prevail in East and West after the fourth century.

To establish the Roman origin of the Fragment from this remark on the authorship of the Shepherd, it must be assumed as a sound principle of literary criticism that any book was written in any place to which the author chose to refer! To call such reasoning puerile would be to bestow on it undeserved honor, for children are usually acute reasoners from such knowledge as they have. Much of the "brilliancy" of not a few "brilliant historical scholars" consists in their capacity to reason in this manner on one page, and then, a few pages further on, to assert as an undoubted fact what they have thus deduced.[1]

But even if it be conceded that this list was written in Rome—and this is conceding much—what is there to connect it with the Roman church? That is another great leap, in utter de-

[1] Sanday puts the case very mildly when he says of Harnack: "He sorely needs to learn to weigh degrees of probability, and not to build upon pure conjecture as if it were certain" ("Inspiration," p. 25, note).

fiance of all rules of logic. Yet a recent writer on the Canon has gone so far as not merely to ascribe this document to the Roman church, but to say that the matter is "beyond a doubt"[1]— that "we feel in it the pulse-beat of the authority of Rome." Let every reader read again the entire document and see if he can feel any such throb! Let him say for himself what evidence he finds in it of connection with the Roman church.

In favor of a Western origin it has also been pleaded that an Eastern writer would not be likely either to know that Pius was bishop of Rome, or to date events from his episcopate. Both of these assumptions are without support, one of them is in the very teeth of fact. As we have seen, the presumption is rather that facts about the Roman church would be known in the East during the second century. Why should not the name be generally known of one who was for fifteen years bishop of so important a church as that of the capital of the empire? And especially as his brother had written a book that was of so extraordinary popularity in the East that many received it for Scripture? So far from there being any improbability of such

[1] Ferris, pp. 222, 227.

knowledge in the East, we see there is a strong probability in its favor.

And then, the mention of the name of Pius in the Fragment is not "dating" the document, in the sense in which documents were dated in later centuries by Roman episcopates. The mention of Pius has quite another object. "The Shepherd moreover Hermas very recently wrote in the city of Rome, in our own times [that dates the document], while his brother Pius was occupying the chair of the Roman church, *and so* it is fitting that it should be read, indeed, but not publicly in church." "And so," because the book was written by the brother of Bishop Pius, "it is fitting that it should be read" privately, as an edifying book, "but not publicly in the church" as Scripture. The words added do not change, they merely bring out more clearly the meaning of the text. To call this dating the writing from the episcopate of Pius is again to read later history into documents of the second century—an ever-present temptation against which we need to be vigilantly on guard.

This Fragment is the corner-stone of those who maintain that our Canon is of Roman origin, and that a Canon made in Alexandria would have

been something very different. This is why it has been subjected to this critical examination at greater length than its real importance deserves. If the corner-stone thus crumbles into dust at a touch, what can be hoped of the superstructure? Who can speak for Alexandria if not Origen and Athanasius?—the one the greatest scholar, the other the greatest theologian and bishop that city and church ever produced. Origen seems to have accepted all the books of our Canon, and no others, though we have no formal list from him. He says explicitly that there were doubts in his day about Second Peter and Second and Third John, and he does not believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, but he expresses no doubts as to the canonicity of any of them. He believes for himself that the Shepherd is inspired, but does not claim that it is canonical. As for Athanasius, the first formal list in our possession, that exactly corresponds to our canonical books, is his list of the books, canonical in his day, in his Festal Letter of 367.

Now, if this list of the Fragment, by an unknown author, whose place of writing is only guessed to have been Rome, is to be regarded as an attempt by the Roman church to close the

Canon, *a fortiori* the list of Athanasius must be the attempt of Alexandria to close the Canon. And what is more, the Roman attempt failed, while that of Athanasius was successful. Wherefore, it is proved "beyond a doubt" that our present Canon is not Roman but Alexandrine. The logic is perfect, the conclusion is irresistible —and utterly absurd!

VI

THE "DISPUTED" BOOKS

VI

PROGRESS in the formation of the Canon during the third century was surprisingly slow. At first examination, the Fathers of that period seem to disclose little more than a gain of clearness and precision of statement over those of the last two decades of the second century. Yet perhaps we ought not to be surprised at the little progress made, for an explanation lies close at hand. Heresy, which we have seen to be a stimulus in the formation of the Canon, hastened the process only up to a certain point: it caused a more speedy apprehension and statement of the conclusions in which the Catholic Church found that a general agreement already existed. Beyond that, heresy was undoubtedly a retarding influence, making the church more conservative, and causing every book that was not already generally received with practical unanimity to be closely scrutinized before it was finally accepted.

We find a steadily growing tendency among the Fathers to assert the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, as the general principle un-

derlying the acceptance of the apostolic writings, as authoritative. Tertullian's later writings, extending down to the year 220, abound in such assertions, most notable among which perhaps is this:[1] "Scripture is of God, nature is of God, discipline is of God—whatever is contrary to these is not of God." This is a notable utterance, not only for what it says of Scripture, but for the association of Scripture with two other co-ordinate sources of authority. Origen is yet more explicit, and for the first time roundly asserts the equality of the New Testament with the Old: "It was the same Holy Spirit who was in the prophets and apostles."[2] "The Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God," he tells us, and he apparently held to some dictation theory. Often he speaks of the "superhuman element of the thought," of "the divinity of the Scripture," of a "careful study of the divine word." The last two centuries have hardly produced a theory of inspiration more "high" than Origen's.

From Cyprian we learn the additional and most interesting fact that in his time the New Testament had become the arbiter of all disputes. The

[1] *De Veland. Virg.*, 16.

[2] *De Prin.*, ii. 7; iv. 1. 7; *C. Cel.*, vii. 60.

question of the treatment of the *lapsi,* those who had denied Christ in the stress of persecution, was a most perplexing one, and it was thus decided:

> According, however, to what has before been decided . . . a large number of bishops, we met together; and the divine Scriptures being brought forward on both sides, we balanced the decision with wholesome moderation. . . And lest perchance the bishops in Africa should seem unsatisfactory, we wrote also to Rome, to Cornelius our colleague, concerning this thing, who himself also holding a council with very many bishops, concurred in the same opinion as we held, with equal gravity and wholesome moderation.[1]

This extract from Cyprian has a double interest, as showing not only the position to which the Scriptures of the New Testament had attained as an authority, but also the precise limits of the deference that was paid by the churches of Africa to the church of Rome and its bishop, about 250. "What obstinacy is that," says the same Father, "or what presumption to prefer human tradition to divine ordinance, and not to observe that God is indignant and angry as often as human tradition relaxes and passes by the divine precepts."[2] A reader of Cyprian's Epistles cannot help concluding that, while he thus

[1] Ep. li. 6. [2] Ep. lxxiii. 3.

shows himself correct in theory, placing the written word above all mere tradition, he is not always consistent in practice—in particular, where he justifies "clinic" baptism, and the baptism of new-born babes.

Hippolytus, another Father of this century, speaks what may be left as the final word—for nothing could be more explicit, and it would be merely wearisome to accumulate examples, though there is no lack of them. He says: "There is, brethren, one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the holy Scriptures, and from no other source. For just as a man, if he wishes to be skilled in the wisdom of this world, will find himself unable to get at it in any other way than by mastering the dogmas of philosophers, so all of us who wish to practise piety will be unable to learn its practice from any other quarter than the oracles of God."[1] In taking leave of this matter, it may not be without interest to observe that this Father, in his description of the end of the world, says, "The public service of God shall be extinguished, psalmody shall cease, the reading of the Scriptures shall not be heard"—an unconscious testi-

[1] *Against Noetus*, 9.

mony to the place that the reading of the apostolic writings had come to fill in the minds of Christians.

Our next positive landmark in the formation of the Canon is in the first half of the fourth century, in the list of New Testament books given by Eusebius, not as a critic, but as a historian. He names as the accepted writings (*ὁμολογούμενα*): the four Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of Paul, First John, First Peter, Revelation.[1] As to the last named, he indicates some personal misgiving, but nevertheless testifies to its general acceptance. Among the disputed writings (*ἀντιλεγόμενα*), "which are nevertheless recognized by many," he gives James, Jude, Second Peter, Second and Third John. In an earlier passage in his History, Eusebius had said that "Paul's fourteen epistles are well known and undisputed," and though he immediately added, "it is not right to overlook the fact that some have rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews," he evidently regards any such opposition as having virtually ceased, or he could not speak of *fourteen* Epistles as "undisputed."[2]

The sum of progress with regard to the Canon,

[1] H. E., iii. 25. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 3. 5.

made in a century ending with the writing of the great History of Eusebius, may be said to be this: The Epistle to the Hebrews has been definitely added to the twenty books of the Provisional Canon, and the right of the Apocalypse to a place in the collection, though still questioned by "some," is virtually vindicated and has won the assent of the great majority. The testimony of Eusebius is the more valuable and convincing, in that he does not hesitate to set before his readers all the evidence known to him against the canonicity of these two writings.

We have already sufficiently considered the case against the Apocalypse, and have noted the final decision in its favor, delayed some decades after the time of Eusebius. It will be necessary, and interesting as well, to trace the vicissitudes of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which did not reach an unquestioned place in the Canon without much opposition and long searching. One reason for the slow progress toward acceptance may have been that the letter was evidently addressed, not to Hebrews in general, but to a single society. Westcott thinks the church was in or near Jerusalem, but against this is the fact that the writing seems to have been first known in the West. As

we have seen, there are numerous and unmistakable traces of this Epistle in the letter of Clement of Rome, several quotations, and many allusions that constitute a moral certainty of the inference that Hebrews was well known to Clement. If the society of Hebrews to which the letter was addressed was in or near Rome, this would be easy to understand; but if so far east as Jerusalem it is inexplicable. There are, to be sure, what are thought to be traces of the use of this Epistle in Polycarp and Justin, but the two generations that separate these writers from Clement would be time enough to allow for a knowledge of the writing to extend to the East. Though these early writers receive the Epistle as apostolic and authoritative, none of them says anything about its authorship.

The earliest mention of Hebrews in connection with its authorship is by Clement of Alexandria. Quoting from a lost work of that Father, the "Hypotyposes," Eusebius says: "And he says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's, and was written in the Hebrew language; but that Luke, having carefully translated it, gave it to the Greeks, and hence the same coloring in expression is discernible in this Epistle and the Acts; and

that the name, Paul an Apostle, was very properly not prefixed, for he says, that writing to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced against him and suspected, he with great wisdom did not repel them in the beginning by putting down his name." [1] This is evidently an attempt of Clement to account for two things that constitute almost insuperable objections to receiving this as an Epistle of Paul: the difference in the style from the other letters of Paul, which a Greek would feel much more keenly than we can, and secondly, the absence of Paul's name, in defiance of his well-established custom. We need not stop to point out the failure of this well-meant and even ingenious attempt to make the virtual Pauline authorship of the Epistle probable, further than to say that it is strange that one to whom Greek was vernacular should not have seen that the style of Hebrews is no more like Luke's than it is like Paul's. The real point is that the Epistle was now beginning to be ascribed to Paul, as a ground for placing it in the Canon.

The Greek Fathers generally agreed that Hebrews was to be received as canonical, but they did not at once agree with Clement as to the Paul-

[1] H. E., vi. 14.

ine authorship. Again we have to rely on a quotation by Eusebius [1] from the lost "Homilies" of Origen on Hebrews:

> That the verbal style of the Epistle . . . is not rude like the language of the apostle, who acknowledged himself "rude in speech," that is, in expression, but that its diction is purer Greek, any one who has the power to discern differences of phraseology will acknowledge. Moreover, that the thoughts of the Epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings any one who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit. . . If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this Epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the Epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the Epistle, and of others that Luke. the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it.

Clement and Origen agree in accepting the Epistle as apostolic, probably Pauline in substance, and neither has the least doubt as to its canonicity. Athanasius accepted it as one of the "fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul," and it is quoted as Paul's by such Fathers of the Greek

[1] H. E., vi. 25. 11-14.

Church as Didymus, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Chrysostom.[1]

In the West, however, where the writing seems to have been known earliest, and probably not as a Pauline Epistle at first, there was grave doubt as to its canonicity. Tertullian was inclined to accept it, as apostolic, though not Pauline: "For there is extant withal an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas—a man sufficiently accredited by God, as being one whom Paul has stationed next to himself [here he quotes 1 Cor. 15 : 6]. . . And, of course, the Epistle of Barnabas is more generally received among the churches than that apocryphal Shepherd of adulterers."[2] The bitterness in the last sentence is doubtless due to the anti-Montanistic tone of the Shepherd. It might be doubtful whether Tertullian refers here to the Epistle to the Hebrews or the document known to us as the Epistle of Barnabas, but he removes all possible doubt by going on to quote at length from chap.

[1] Any who may be interested in verifying these statements will find abundant references for that purpose in Westcott's "Commentary on Hebrews," p. 72.

[2] *De Pud.*, 20.

6 of our canonical Hebrews. It is worth while noting as we pass that Tertullian proposes as the test of canonicity, the reception of a book by the churches, the test that we have found to be decisive from the beginning.

Cyprian ignores Hebrews, and in his extant writings Irenæus does not quote from it, but we have the statement of Eusebius that in two books of his that are lost he quoted from the writing and also from the Wisdom of Solomon. Gaius, the Roman presbyter whom we have had occasion to mention before, according to Eusebius mentioned "only thirteen epistles of the holy apostle, not counting that to the Hebrews with the others."[1] And the historian adds, "Unto our day there are some among the Romans who do not consider this a work of the apostle."

The East and the West differed in judgment a long time on the question of the admission of Hebrews to the Canon, largely because they had different standards of canonicity. The Alexandrine Fathers, and those of the East generally, considered sufficient the test of "apostolicity," by which they meant proceeding from the apostolic circle and agreeing with apostolic doctrine,

[1] H. E., vi. 20.

while the West laid more stress on actual apostolic authorship. Alexandria, therefore, satisfied of the virtual apostolicity of Hebrews, though uncertain as to the precise authorship, had no hesitation about accepting the book. Rome, on the other hand, having well-founded doubts about the authorship, hesitated to accept the book. The judgment of Jerome may be taken to express the final view of the West: "It does not matter who is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, since it is the work of a churchman, and is constantly read in the churches." [1] In this the West distinctly abandoned its first view, and yielded to the insistence of the East. Those who hold that our Canon is a Roman production, and that the East would have produced a far different one, have in this history of the Epistle to the Hebrews a hard nut to crack. If they are prudent they will let it severely alone.

We discover from Eusebius that one other step has been taken, besides settling permanently the status of Hebrews and the Apocalypse: out of the mass of other writings that were received in some localities or quoted by some Fathers as Scripture, there was gradually separated in the third

[1] Ep. cxxix.

century another group which, though not definitely accepted as canonical, were now accepted by "many." These were the very books whose ultimate addition completed the Canon. It becomes important, therefore, to consider each of these books in turn, and to discover, if we can, what reasons or influences hindered their early reception, and what led to their final acceptance.

The first to be considered is the Epistle of James. There could not well be a greater difference between students of Christian literature than we find among the recent critics regarding this Epistle. Jülicher and Spitta are good examples; both stand in the first rank of historical critics, and each urges with equal confidence a view that cannot be reconciled with the other's. Jülicher believes that the book is a homily in the form of a letter, "consisting of separate chapters merely strung together, and treating of certain questions of Christian life and feeling." In this judgment of the literary structure of James, Jülicher is probably right, but why does such a structure discredit an apostolic origin of the writing? Who is entitled at this day to lay down the law as to how an apostle must write, in order to have his work accepted as authentic by this

cultivated twentieth century? But James, Jülicher goes on to say, could not have attained such fluency in Greek (why not? since other apostles did), and could not have composed an epistle that makes religion consist in morality; and, worst of all, the passage 2: 14-16 is "wholly inconceivable as coming from the mouth of James in the last years of his life." Since many scholars have so conceived it, Jülicher must be wrong in saying that it is inconceivable, but let that pass. The passage in question is a polemic against Paul's doctrine of justification, says Jülicher, and proves the writing to be considerably post-Pauline. Harnack agrees with Jülicher in the main, and both would make the date of the Epistle about contemporary with the Shepherd, say 160.

There is, however, an objection to this theory that ought to prove insuperable. A reader of the Shepherd must see that a great change has come over the church since the days of the apostles. Simplicity has given place to formalism; the church is not a simple society of the redeemed, but a highly organized corporate entity; baptism is no longer the mere symbol of a spiritual fact, but the means by which a spiritual change is

accomplished—a sacrament; in short, martyrdom has ceased to be a simple witness for Christ, but has become the chief glory to which a Christian can look forward. Now let one turn from the Shepherd and read James; if he has any spiritual apprehension whatever, he will feel instantly that he is breathing a different atmosphere—the church and its teaching are simple, practical, not formal and fanatical. Jülicher thinks that to make James the earliest of the New Testament Epistles, as Meyer does in his Commentary, is "grotesque." Nothing could well be more "grotesque" than to make the Shepherd and James contemporary documents. There lies between them at least a century of change and degeneration.

Spitta shows more insight into the real character of the Epistle, but he goes to the opposite extreme: he holds it to be a Jewish composition, belonging to the century before Christ, that has been adapted to a Christian use. That it is a Jewish composition, in the sense that it was composed by a Jew, is certainly true, and that Jewish doctrine has been given a Christian turn is as evident; but that is exactly what we ought to expect in an Epistle written by James, in view of

what the New Testament shows his character and position among the early disciples to have been. The one passage that seems most in keeping with Spitta's hypothesis (2 : 2) is not inexplicable. This very word "synagogue" is used in the Shepherd to denote a Christian assembly, which shows that such use, though undoubtedly rare in Christian literature, is not unexampled.[1] At the time James wrote, the "ecclesia" and the "synagogue" had not been so completely differentiated, either in name or in character, as they afterward became—that hypothesis (that fact rather) solves all the difficulty. And in the last resort, it will be hard to persuade the Christian world that the book of the entire New Testament, that shows the most extraordinary resemblance to the Sermon on the Mount, could have been the product of the generation before Christ.

All of this is of course foreign to our main purpose, unless it can be made to throw some light on the canonicity of James, which is a question in itself quite independent of questions of authorship and date. But it is self-evident that, if James did not write before 160, his book could not have been quoted by Clement of Rome, in

[1] *Mand.*, II. 9.

97. There are, however, a number of cases in which Clement seems to use the phraseology of James, the most notable being "Love covers a multitude of sins." Some critics are inclined to sneer at such echoing phrases as no real evidence that a writing existed and was known, but can such an objection be seriously maintained? When we meet, in any book published since 1870, the phrases "honest doubt," "faultily faultless," "the parliament of man," the "claims of long descent," we do not hesitate an instant to say, These are echoes of Tennyson. And if we met one of them in a book published before 1850—as matter of fact we do not—we should be very much surprised indeed. Likewise, when we read "lost leader," "purer than the purest," "a century of sonnets" and "the first fine, careless rapture," we say unhesitatingly, That's Browning. We never pause to consider the possibility, say one chance in ten million, that somebody else may have hit accidentally on just those collocations of words, but we regard them as conscious quotations from well-known poets, or the unconscious use of that common mintage which passes current everywhere, though few persons know whose is the image and superscription. It is surpris-

ing that scholars who insist, as a primary principle, that we should treat the Bible "like any other book," should continually reason about biblical literature as they would not about any other.

The Didache and Epistle of Barnabas contain similar allusions to James, especially the words describing the way of death, nearly every one of which is from the vocabulary of James. The Shepherd has so many correspondences with James that Spitta is moved to consider the later writing also of Jewish origin, with Christian interpolations. These correspondences are so numerous and so striking as to make it nearly certain, either that the Shepherd quotes from James or James from the Shepherd. Few students of both documents will have any doubt which is the original. Even Jülicher and Harnack, who make James contemporary with the Shepherd, do not hint that the Epistle is the derived writing.

If the book was apostolic and was known so early as this sort of evidence would imply, how came it to be so late in winning general acceptance? It is evident that epistles addressed to particular churches had better opportunities for

speedy circulation than those of a more general nature. Not only would the church addressed prize a letter written primarily for its members more than one intended for all Christians, but the church would take more pains to make such a letter known to the churches with which it was in correspondence. Correspondence between the churches began even in apostolic times, and we learn from an interesting passage in the Shepherd how extensive were the arrangements for maintaining such communications and the sharing of letters and other Christian literature:

> After that I saw a vision in my house, and that old woman came and asked me if I had yet given the book to the presbyters. And I said that I had not. And then she said, "You have done well, for I have some words to add." But when I finish all the words, all the elect will then become acquainted with them through you. You will therefore write two books, and you will send the one to Clemens and the other to Grapte. And Clemens will send his to foreign countries, for permission has been granted him to do so. And Grapte will admonish the widows and orphans. But you will read the words in this city, along with the presbyters who preside over the church.[1]

Although the episcopate was well established at the time the Shepherd was written, and we are assured by the Muratorian Fragment that Her-

[1] *Vis.*, ii. 4.

mas was brother of the bishop of Rome, it is the presbyters who have charge of the sacred books and determine what shall be publicly read in the church. This does not imply, of course, that the bishop would have no voice in the matter; he would naturally have a powerful influence in deciding such a question, but he was no autocrat, settling all such disputed questions by his *ipse dixit*. We shall have occasion to recur to this matter later.

Even if the Epistle of James were known among the Eastern churches, it might make its way slowly elsewhere. It seems to have been the loyal recognition of the East that finally established its position in the Canon. Origen is the first Father who is known to have quoted the book as Scripture and as the work of James. In his commentary on John 19 : 6 he says, "For if it is said faith exists apart from works, such [faith] is dead, as we read in the Epistle that goes by the name of James." But though the last clause might be taken to imply a doubt regarding the authorship of the book, Origen frequently quotes it as Scripture, and in his list of canonical books he includes this Epistle. Cyril of Jerusalem gives it in his list of sacred books for cate-

chumens, as also do Athanasius and Epiphanius, while Chrysostom highly esteemed the book. Theodore of Mopsuestia alone among the Greek Fathers, seems to have rejected it, though in his case the testimony comes at second-hand through another writer.[1] Didymus, who died in 394, left a commentary on all the catholic Epistles, which testifies to the fact of their acceptance in Alexandria at that time, and this conclusion is confirmed by the canon of Athanasius.

It is the fashion among critics to speak of a hesitation in the West about accepting James as canonical. One can find no ground for this statement, however, except the omission of the book from the Muratorian Fragment, and we have already seen how uncertain a "Western" authority this is. But the Shepherd is also Western, according to the Fragment at least, and the Shepherd undoubtedly recognizes James as Scripture; and the Fragment recognizes the Shepherd as a witness superior to itself, in antiquity, if not in authority. A little later Tertullian quotes the Epistle, and his example is followed by Lactantius. All doubts may be said to have ceased

[1] See Westcott, 451. Leontius of Byzantium, at the close of the sixth century, tells us that Theodore rejected "the Epistle of James and other of the Catholic Epistles."

with the generation of Jerome [1] and Augustine, for these Fathers quote the book freely like the other Scriptures, and definitely name it as a member of the Canon.

The second and third Epistles of John ought never to have raised any question of authenticity. Their style is so strikingly like that of the first Epistle, that either all three are the work of a single author, or some later writer of the two shorter letters has succeeded marvelously in imitating the style of his predecessor. The latter hypothesis is that to which modern doubters of the authenticity of these letters are reduced, and it is too forced to be credible. The difficulty concerning the canonization of these letters would seem largely to have been a doubt whether epistles in which the personal note was so strong were sufficiently fitted for general edification to entitle them to public reading in the churches. For we must bear in mind throughout this inquiry into the history of the Canon, that in the patristic

[1] Jerome writes, in his book on the "Lives of Illustrious Men," of this Epistle: "James . . . wrote a single Epistle, which is reckoned among the seven catholic Epistles, and even this is claimed by some to have been published by some one else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority" (chap. 2). But Jerome is very conscientious in mentioning all doubts and questionings, even those that he does not share. He makes the canonicity of James in his day unmistakable.

literature "Scripture" means not merely writings composed by apostles and believed therefore to be inspired, but writings fitted to edify the church. This principle will explain both the ignoring of these Epistles by the early Fathers, and the wavering and uncertain attitude of the churches toward them after the letters had become widely known.

The earliest reference to them in the literature is probably that of Clement of Alexandria, who speaks of the "longer Epistle" [1] of John, thereby implying knowledge of at least one that was shorter. Moreover, Eusebius assures us that Clement summarized all the catholic Epistles in his lost "Hypotyposes." [2] Irenæus accurately quotes by name 2 John 7, 8, as from "the aforesaid Epistle," which, however, was First John. Either Irenæus here remembers incorrectly, or, as many think, had a MS in which First John and Second John were given continuously as one Epistle.[3] If this latter hypothesis could be established, it might throw light on the perplexing words of the Muratorian Fragment, "*two* belonging to the above-named John—or bearing the name of John." This has been independ-

[1] *Strom.* [2] H. E., vi. 14. 1. [3] *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 16. 18.

ently conjectured to mean that First John and Second John were reckoned as one, and Third John was the second in this enumeration.

It will be noted that the Muratorian Fragment seems to disparage the authenticity of the Johannine Epistles, and that its doubt applies to all of them. In this it differs from the general voice of the church, which accepted First John practically without question. By the time of Eusebius [1] there seems still to have been doubt concerning the shorter letters, for he speaks of "those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name." [2] Origen had anticipated the historian in this view of the case when he said, "He has left also an epistle of very few lines; perhaps also a second and third; but not all considered them genuine, and together they do not contain a hundred lines." [3] And Dionysius is quoted by Eusebius as speaking of "the reputed second and third Epistles of John." [4]

These more or less explicit doubts are echoed

[1] H. E., iii. 24.

[2] In the West this doubt lasted at least as late as Jerome's time, for he attributes Second and Third John to John the Presbyter (*De Vir. Ill.* 9).

[3] H. E., vi. 25. [4] *Ibid.*, vii. 25. 11.

by the Latin Fathers. Tertullian ignores the Epistle, while Cyprian[1] quotes 2 John 1, 11, and for the rest the chief evidence of the West is the evidence of silence. This may, however, imply that the Epistles were little esteemed by comparison with the rest of the New Testament, not that their canonicity was denied. Is not that practically their position in the church to-day? These letters are less valued, because they are less valuable, than the longer Epistles, but the recognition of differing degrees of value among the books of the Canon is not a denial of canonicity. All doubt seems, at any rate, to have vanished by the time of Cyril of Jerusalem, who included them among the "seven catholic Epistles" that he commends to catechumens, and Athanasius accepts them as canonical without question, as do Jerome and Augustine in the West.

The Epistle of Jude has as good early attestation as most of the New Testament writings. Clement of Rome has been thought to imitate the doxology, or, as is perhaps more probable, both writers use a form of words that was already liturgical and common to all the churches. Perhaps the strongest attestation, if not the earliest,

[1] *De Haer. Bapt.*

comes from the East. One passage in the Didache [1] is too similar to Jude 29 to be an accident, and it is hardly satisfactory, as in the case of Clement, to have recourse to a theory of a common origin. The critics have overworked that theory as much as orthodox writers have stretched too far their "quotations" from the Scriptures in the early Fathers. Polycarp's "be built up upon the faith that was delivered to you" is almost certainly an echo of Jude 3 : 20; for the phrases "built up upon the faith" and "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" are peculiar to Jude, and have ever since been much used by all Christian writers. Clement of Alexandria quotes Jude, by name and otherwise, in his "Stromata" and his "Hypotyposes." In this lost book, of which we have only a few fragments, Eusebius [2] tells us that he gave summaries of all the canonical Scriptures, not omitting the doubtful books, such as Jude and other catholic Epistles. Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras make references more or less clear to Jude, without naming the book.

In fact, the most serious lack of attestation in the East is the absence of Jude from the Peshito

[1] ii. 7. [2] H. E., vi. 14. 1.

version, and the consequent ignoring of the book in all Syriac literature of the early centuries. To this should probably be added the fact that Origen, as quoted by Eusebius, does not include Jude in his list of canonical writings, though he quotes freely from the Epistle in his exegetical writings. And Eusebius tells us there were doubts in his day: "These things are recorded in regard to James, who is said to be the author of the first of the so-called catholic Epistles. But it is to be observed that it is disputed—at least, not many of the ancients have mentioned it, as is the case likewise with the Epistle that bears the name of Jude, which is also one of the seven catholic Epistles. Nevertheless, we know that these also, with the rest, have been read publicly in very many churches."[1] And elsewhere, as we have seen, Eusebius classes Jude among the Antilegomena, or disputed books.

Some of the great Fathers of the East must have at least esteemed the book lightly, for we find no quotations from it in the voluminous writings of Chrysostom and Theodoret, while Theodore of Mopsuestia is said definitely to have rejected it. Nevertheless, it is in the East that

[1] ii. 23. 25.

we find the first evidence of final acceptance, and that in Alexandria, where the first positive attestation is found. Didymus included it in his Commentary of the catholic Epistles, and the subsequent approval of Athanasius, in which Cyril of Jerusalem concurred, gave the final settlement to the long-vexed question of the Epistle's canonicity.

In the West the evidence is less clear. Irenæus may refer to this book, for he uses the phrase "the faith that has been delivered," and Tertullian certainly knew and esteemed the book as Scripture, for he regards Jude's quoting of Enoch to be proof of the authority of the latter—"Enoch has apostolic testimony in Jude," he says.[1] Cyprian ignores the book. While the Muratorian Fragment contains it, it is lacking in the list of books contained in the Old Latin version given by Cassiodorus, and also in the Canon Mommsenianus, an African list of the middle of the fourth century.[2] It is fully accepted by Jerome and Augustine.

Considering the brevity of the writing, as

[1] *De Cult. Fem.*, i. 3.

[2] *De Inst. Div. Lit.*, xiv. See Westcott, p. 584. Not all the catholic Epistles seem to have been received into the Latin canon until the fourth century. For the Canon Mommsenianus, see Westcott, p. 572, where it is called the "Cheltenham List."

well as its peculiar character, we must conclude that it had a wider acceptance at the beginning of the third century than we could have reasonably expected. The doubts regarding its canonicity that thereafter prevailed until its final acceptance in the fifth century, and even found occasional utterance after that, were doubtless due to its contents. Modern critics object to it largely on the ground of its doubtful authenticity, many of them holding that it is a pseudonymous writing of the second century, probably not earlier than 150. But unless the words of Eusebius are to be taken as expressing such doubt, no doubt of the apostolicity of Jude is expressed by the Fathers. It seems to be the use of the book of Enoch, whose canonicity was yet more in doubt, that threw doubts on Jude. The angelology borrowed from that Jewish Apocalypse lent itself easily to the use of Gnostic heretics, and this would inevitably cast suspicion upon the book. It was not merely the fact that Jude borrowed ideas from Enoch, but that he mentioned the book by name, thereby giving at least a *quasi* recognition of its canonicity, that caused the real difficulty. The church was more and more settling to the conviction that Enoch was not canonical. The problem there-

fore was, Could Jude be consistently canonized while Enoch was excluded? And the difficulty was sufficiently grave to delay complete recognition of Jude for more than a century.

The second Epistle of Peter was the New Testament writing that (next to the Apocalypse) was longest doubted, was latest admitted to the Canon, and has been most frequently questioned since. Harnack thinks it the one clearly pseudonymous writing of the New Testament. Doubtless this treatment of the Epistle was due in part to the lack of so clear attestation from the early Christian writers as the other books had. For, while some orthodox historians of the Canon stoutly maintain that it is quoted by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Barnabas, Justin, Irenæus, and the Shepherd, it cannot be said that a good case is made out. The one sentence that most frequently appears in the Fathers named—"a thousand years are one day"—may quite as well be a reminiscence of Ps. 90 : 4 as of 2 Peter 3 : 8 (it is an exact quotation of neither), and no Father before Methodius (305) quotes it as Peter's.

Beyond this lack of early attestation, the literary character of the book, and its evident

literary relations to two other books that were candidates for a place in the Canon, constituted a serious difficulty. The substantial identity of Jude 3 to 16 and 2 Peter 2 : 1-19[1] can be accounted for only on one of two theories: one writer borrowed from the other, or else both borrowed from a common original. The former hypothesis is the simpler, and hence to be preferred; but in that case, which is the prior document? This is a literary problem that cannot be said to be solved as yet, since the foremost critics of our day disagree in their conclusions. The direct, simple style of Jude makes it probable that this is the older writing, and more than this cannot be said.

But there is another book that has unsolved relations with Second Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter. While they have no long passage in common, there are many sentences and phrases that one must have borrowed from the other, or both from a common source—unless, indeed, the books are the work of a single author, as a few critics hold. Which of these is the prior work? Harnack says that Second Peter borrows from the Apocalypse of Peter, while Jülicher seems to think that just

[1] Compare also Jude 17, 18 and 2 Peter 3 : 3.

the reverse is the fact.[1] This difference between two of the most famous critics is symptomatic, and confirms what is said above—the literary problem remains unsolved—very likely is insoluble. The Fathers appreciated this twin problem, and because they could not solve it, and the external evidence in favor of Second Peter was weak, the doubts concerning its canonicity were obstinate and long enduring.

Our first positive evidence in favor of the canonicity of the book is the fact that Clement of Alexandria included it in the summaries of his "Hypotyposes." The next Father who makes reference to the Epistle is Origen, and he is not very consoling to one who is looking for evidence of its acceptance, for he says: "And Peter on whom the church of Christ is built, 'against which the gates of hades shall not prevail,' has left one acknowledged Epistle; perhaps also a second, but this is doubtful."[2] Nevertheless, the same thing is true of this statement that we have found in previous cases—this Father nullifies his expressed doubt by frequently quoting the book in his commentaries and homilies, as we learn

[1] For Harnack's view, see his *Chronologie*, I.: 471; for Jülicher's, see his "Introduction," p. 239.

[2] H. E., vi. 25. 8.

from the fragments of them preserved in Migne's Patrology.

So late as Eusebius,[1] at least, these doubts remained in the East. "One Epistle of Peter," he says, "that called the first, is acknowledged as genuine. And this the ancient elders used freely in their own writings as an undisputed work. But we have learned that his second extant Epistle does not belong to the Canon; yet, as it has appeared profitable to many, it has been used with the other Scriptures." And again,[2] "Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are . . . also the second Epistle of Peter." But with Eusebius the turning-point is reached in the Greek Church. Didymus and Athanasius accept the Epistle fully, and this voice of Alexandria is echoed by Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzen, and the Greek Fathers generally.

The African Church seems to have led in the West in acceptance of this Epistle. At least, that seems a valid inference from the use made of it in the well-known letter of Firmilian to Cyprian regarding the error of Stephen. He denounces the latter as "even herein defaming

[1] H. E., iii. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 25. 3.

Peter and Paul, the blessed apostles, as if the very men delivered this who in their epistles execrated heretics and warned us to avoid them." [1] The reference must be to Second Peter, because the first Epistle contains nothing of that sort. For the Latin Church Jerome [2] speaks the final word: "Therefore the two Epistles that are ascribed to Peter differ in style and character and in the structure of words. From which we perceive that he was compelled to make use of different interpreters." Jerome's idea is, of course, that the apostle could not write Greek, and as two men translated his ideas from Aramaic into Greek, we have a sufficient explanation of the differences in style between the two Epistles.[3] This was an ingenious attempt to explain away those differences of style which no previous Father mentions, but of which so much has been made by modern critics. In any case, we know that the words "ascribed to Peter" in the above quotation do not indicate the least doubt on the part of Jerome as to the canonicity of the book. As in the case of Hebrews, he would regard the

[1] Cyprian, Ep. 74. (Ox. 75.) [2] Ep. cxx.

[3] Again, in his "Lives of Illustrious Men," Jerome says: "He wrote two Epistles that are called catholic, the second of which, on account of its difference from the first in style, is considered by many not to be by him" (chap. 1).

question of canonicity as quite separate from that of authenticity, and as to the latter he was indifferent if he were only assured of apostolicity.

As we sum up the results of our investigation into these Antilegomena, we find how clear and unmistakable is the evidence of the decisive influence of Alexandria in the settlement of the Canon. We have seen before that we owe to Alexandrine theologians the retention of Hebrews. We now find that the same thing is true regarding the disputed catholic Epistles. The example of Clement was powerful, if not decisive, in fixing the number to be recognized as seven, and the adhesion of Didymus and Athanasius to this view proved decisive. Whatever hesitation there had been in the West, when Jerome and Augustine followed the lead of Athanasius, it quickly disappeared. The approval of these three Fathers virtually settled the question of the Canon. They unanimously approved the twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and no more. With their approval the Canon is virtually "closed."

VII

THE REJECTED BOOKS

VII

THAT is an unusually judicious and discriminating remark of Harnack's at the close of his criticism of Zahn's work on the Canon: "The New Testament is not the product of a collection, but a reduction of the whole early Christian literature, including the Jewish Apocalypses."[1] The history of the formation of the Canon is a wonderful process of winnowing and selection. The books that compose our New Testament were not hastily put together, but gradually, out of a great mass of competitors, the Christian churches came to a complete unanimity in the choice of those to be reckoned as canonical. If there is in all the history of literature a case of the survival of the fittest, the New Testament Canon is such a case.

To the account given by Eusebius of the canonical books of his time, which he divides into the accepted and the disputed, he adds a further list of books that were not canonical. Of these, he names Clement, the Didache, Barnabas, the

[1] *Das Neue Testament um das Jahre 200*, p. 111.

Shepherd, the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Peter, Gospel of Peter, the Preaching of Peter, and the Apocalypse of Peter. Elsewhere he names the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mathias, Gospel according to the Hebrews, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles. Books like these he places in a class below the Antilegomena, which he calls "among the spurious" (ἐν τοῖς νόθοις, or literally, "bastards" or "counterfeits"). It will be seen that these books correspond to the four types of literature in the Canon: Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse, and it will be convenient to consider them in groups following that order.

Of the great mass of uncanonical "Gospels" that had appeared by the middle of the second century, not more than three can be said ever to have had the slightest chance of acceptance. Such documents as the Protevangelion, attributed to James the Less, the Gospel of the Infancy, and the Gospel of Nicodemus, had their spurious character so stamped upon them, they abounded in such puerilities and blasphemies, that no Father ever quotes one of them as authority, or testifies to their having been read in the churches anywhere. Neither orthodox nor heretic would receive them.

Their own weight was enough to sink them into oblivion, and in the Christian world to-day only a few curious scholars know of their existence.

With three other "Gospels," however, the case was different. The Gospel of Peter is frequently referred to by the Fathers in a way indicating that its claims to canonicity were at least considered, though uniformly rejected. The earliest reference to it is by Serapion, bishop of Antioch, about 190. Eusebius tells us that Serapion wrote a treatise on the "so-called Gospel of Peter," in order "to refute the falsehoods which that Gospel contained," and the historian quotes the following passage: A. D. 190

> For we, brethren, received both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely ascribed to them, knowing that such were not handed down to us. When I visited you I supposed that all of you held the true faith, and as I had not read the Gospel which they put forward under the name of Peter, I said, "If this is the only thing that occasions dispute among you, let it be read." But now having learned, from what has been told me, that their mind was involved in some heresy, I will hasten to come to you again. Therefore, brethren, expect me shortly. But you will learn, brethren, from what has been written to you, that we perceived the nature of the heresy of Marcianus, and that not understanding what he was saying, he contradicted himself. For having obtained this Gospel from others who had

studied it diligently, namely, from the successors of those who first used it, whom we call Docetae (for most of their opinions are connected with the teaching of that school), we have been able to read it through, and we find many things in accordance with the true doctrine of the Saviour, but some things added to that doctrine, which we have pointed out for you farther on.[1]

Origen, in his Commentary on Matthew, speaks of "a tradition in the Gospel of Peter," but this very equivocal mention is the sole citation of the book in patristic literature. Theodoret speaks of this Gospel as having been used by the Nazarenes, and a later allusion to it by Jerome seems to be based on the testimony of Eusebius[2] rather than on personal knowledge.

This was all that was known until, in 1866, a parchment was discovered in Upper Egypt, containing a fragment of this Gospel, less than six thousand words. It gives the account of the passion, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, in the main as in our canonical Gospels, but with many amplifications of detail, most of which are unimportant, while some would be at least interesting, if their truth could be established. For example, Joseph of Arimathea is said to have been the friend of Pilate and to have begged the body

[1] H. E., vi. 12. 3-6.
[2] H. E., ii. 2.

of Jesus before the crucifixion; one of the malefactors spoke from the cross rebuking the multitude, "We for the evils that we have done have suffered thus, but this man, who hath become the Saviour of men, what wrong hath he done you?" The words of our Lord's last cry are given as, "My Power, my Power, thou hast forsaken me." The "Eli" or "Eloi" of the canonical Gospels might be translated "My Power," and that is probably the explanation of this variation. The Docetic element of which Serapion complained is found in the statement that when crucified "he held his peace, as though having no pain"; and to the above words of the last cry, it is added, "And when he had said it he was taken up." The chief deviation from the canonical account of the passion is the attempt to exculpate Pilate and throw the entire blame for the death of Jesus on the Jews by making Herod the judge who condemned him. The account of the resurrection so differs from that given by the canonical Gospels as almost to deserve to be called totally different, and wherever it differs it is for the worse.

From this fragment, brief as it is, we can see why the Church, with so complete unanimity,

rejected this Gospel. It was evidently a later form of the apostolic tradition, deliberately altered in many particulars for purposes that may be easily inferred. After a custom that became common in the second century, the name of an apostle was attached to it to give it greater currency, but so far as we can learn it was always and everywhere believed to be pseudonymous. We need not feel a single pang of regret that the Gospel has perished; the brief fragment that has been lately recovered adds nothing to our knowledge, is worthless for Christian edification, and stimulates little desire for the possession of the remainder. Nobody will venture to deny that its exclusion from the Canon was wise and completely justified by its now proved character.

Of the Gospel according to the Egyptians, we know little except the title, but we may, if we please, imagine a great deal. That ancient homily, known as Clement's Second Epistle to the Corinthians—with which it is now certain that Clement had nothing to do—in chapter XII gives a number of quotations purporting to be the words of our Lord, a number of which are not found in any of our four Gospels. One of these is also quoted by Clement of Alex-

andria, with this statement: "We do not have this saying in the four Gospels that have been handed down to us, but in the one according to the Egyptians."[1] This remark, taken with the context, clearly indicates an opinion on the part of Clement that this Gospel is inferior in authority to the four, since they were *tradita,* "handed down," as this was not. This is practically all that we know about this Gospel, but the conjectures and theories about it have been endless. These have amused the critics and done nobody else any harm. One such conjecture has to do with Justin. Inasmuch as many of his quotations do not exactly agree with our present Gospels, some have guessed that he used the Gospel of the Egyptians. There is no harm in such guessing—also no profit.

The Gospel according to the Hebrews has also been supposed to be the one from which Justin quoted. Of this we know hardly more than of the other, for many of the apparent references to it in the Fathers may describe an early tradition, rather than a written book. Eusebius[2] quotes Papias as relating "another story of a woman, who was accused of many sins before

[1] *Strom.*, iii. 13. [2] H. E., iii. 39. 16.

the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews." Some scholars have plausibly conjectured that this is the story of John 7 : 53 to 8 : 11, which practically all critics are now agreed was no part of the original text of our fourth Gospel, but may by some accident in copying or otherwise have been transferred from one Gospel to the other. Jerome tells us more about this Gospel than any other Father. He first became acquainted with it by hearsay from the Christians of Syria. He later became acquainted with, and even copied and translated, a Gospel which he called *ipsum Hebraicum,* "the original Hebrew Gospel," and he appears to have believed this to be the orginal Hebrew of our Matthew, for he says that many called it *Matthaei authenticum.* But it is uncertain whether this is what he elsewhere calls *evangelium juxta* (or *secundum*) *Hebraeos.*

Two things, however, are clear: whatever the relation between this Hebrew Gospel and Matthew, it must have differed considerably from the canonical Matthew of Jerome's day, or he need not have translated it; and, secondly, it was unknown in the West, or he would not have taken the trouble to render it into both Greek and Latin.

Beyond what Jerome tells us, we have only a few references to this Gospel. Clement of Alexandria quotes from it: "In the Gospel of the Hebrews it is written 'He that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall rest.'" [1] The formula "it is written" always ascribes the character of Scripture to a book, and it is evident that Clement regarded this Gospel as authoritative, if not canonical. Origen, who firmly believed there are only four canonical Gospels, quotes it twice, but each time with a phrase of disparagement—"if any one gives credence to the Gospel of the Hebrews," "if any one chooses to accept it, not in the way of authority, yet for the bringing out of the question before us." [2] And Eusebius makes very clear the standing of the book in his time. He tells us that this is the Gospel "with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted," to which he adds later that the Ebionites used only this Gospel "and made small account of the rest." [3]

What relation, if any, this Gospel according to the Hebrews had to the Gospel that, Papias says, Matthew wrote in Hebrew (Aramaic), we

[1] *Strom.*, ii. 9. [2] Commentary on John 2 : 12; Matt. 19 : 16.
[3] H. E., iii. 27.

need not stop to discuss. When we put together our fragmentary knowledge of this writing, we find that we know enough about it not to be astonished that the Church declined to accept it on a par with our four Gospels. The diligence of modern scholars has recovered from the ancient literature twenty-four brief fragments of this Gospel. The most striking saying of our Lord preserved is this: "The Holy Spirit, my mother, took me just now by one of my hairs, and carried me away to the great Mount Tabor." [1] "From one, learn all," says the old Latin proverb. We may judge from this how well fitted the Gospel according to the Hebrews was to instruct and edify the Church. He that has tears to shed over the loss of this document let him shed them now.

There is one other work that at one time seemed likely to become canonical, which differs widely from any of the preceding, namely, the Diatessaron of Tatian. Among all the books at any time permitted to be read in the churches, this alone was avowedly unapostolic in any sense. Its origin was well known, its author making no claim

[1] This saying is quoted no fewer than five times by Origen and Jerome, and evidently made a deep impression on them—as, indeed, it is well fitted to do—but perhaps not quite the impression that it makes on us of to-day.

even to have known the apostles. But as it was composed of the very words of the four Gospels, we can easily see how it might come to be read instead of the original Gospels.

A. D. 170

The Diatessaron appears to have been written in Syriac,[1] and obtained a wide circulation among the Syrian churches. It is supposed to have been written while Tatian was still orthodox, but his later heresy naturally cast a shadow of suspicion backward, and the circumstance that he omitted the genealogies gave rise to the suspicion that he removed them because they tended to prove that Christ was born of David according to the flesh. This caused Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, 420-457, to use his influence and authority to displace the copies from the churches as not only uncanonical but heretical, and to reintroduce the four Gospels in their stead. There was an obvious justification for this action, quite apart from any question of lurking heresy in Tatian's book. Whatever value

[1] But Harnack and other scholars argue that the Diatessaron must have been in Greek originally, because its title is Greek, the only other known writing of Tatian, his "Exhortation to the Greeks" is in Greek, and there was not in his time a Syriac version of the Gospels from which he could have made his harmony. These grounds are not sufficient to warrant the conclusion drawn, and the last is especially questionable.

a Diatessaron may have for private study—and that it has some would seem to be proved by the publication and use of several such compilations in our own day—who would wish to see one substituted for our Gospels in the public worship of our churches to-day? The precise sentiments that would lead the vast majority of Christians to reply with a prompt and emphatic negative, we may believe were felt with equal force by the Christians of the fifth century.

Among the survivals of early Christian literature it is true that we find a considerable number of "Acts," but none of them ever had a chance of becoming canonical. Not even the names of the apostles, pseudonymously attached, were able to give them currency as Scripture, though they were read to some extent as edifying literature. The one book among them all that, for a brief time and in a circumscribed region, was received with some exceptional consideration, the "Acts of Paul and Thecla," owed what little fame and respect it had to the potent name of Paul, rather than to the character of the book. There is reason to believe that these "Acts" are based on an older narrative that possessed historical truth, though no scriptural

A. D. 190

authority. And this is not at all inconsistent with what Tertullian says about the document. In his pre-Montanistic state that Father did not hold that women had a right to teach and baptize, but apparently some had cited these "Acts," which represented Thecla as doing both. To which Tertullian rejoins:

> But if the writings which wrongly go under Paul's name, claim Thecla's example as a license for women's teaching and baptizing, let them know that, in Asia, the presbyter who composed that writing [the Acts of Paul and Thecla] as if he was augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul, was removed from office.

This is a very illuminating extract in more ways than one. It not only shows the general catholic estimate of the Acts of Paul and Thecla at the close of the second century, but it makes clear the attitude of the Church toward writings known to be pseudonymous, and the treatment of those known to be authors of such writings. Here was a man who thought it a virtuous deed, or at any rate a venial offense, to compose a work in the name of Paul and try to palm it off on the Christian world as genuine. The earlier document that he used and embellished

with silly miracles and sillier speeches, if it had any title, was doubtless known as the Acts of Thecla. This performance of his makes the pseudonymous publication of Second Peter psychologically possible. It even explains how a writer of the second half of the second century could pen such words as these: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but had been eye-witnesses to his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when such a voice was borne to him from the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice we heard borne from heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1 : 16-18). We can comprehend even this monstrous falsehood, for the writer is speaking in the name of Peter, and believes that by these lying words he is honoring Peter, who might have spoken them in his own person with truth; and so he has no more compunction of conscience than a novelist feels when he puts in the mouths of his puppet characters words that are untrue to fact. But if Tertullian enables us to understand better the psychological process of the deliberate pro-

duction and foisting on the church of such a pseudonymous epistle as many critics hold Second Peter to be, he also goes far to make it evident that to succeed in such an attempt was virtually impossible. Shall we believe that the forger of the "Acts" was severely punished, while the forger of Second Peter went free and even his name has been lost? This passage from Tertullian puts a burden upon the hypothesis of the pseudonymous origin of Second Peter too great to be borne, and it may as well be dismissed as historically incredible. The church must have known the fact, if the epistle had been pseudonymous, and that it would have repudiated the epistle and punished the author cannot be reasonably doubted.

Midway between the Acts and Epistles, in its literary characteristics, lies the Didache. Clement of Alexandria quotes from it as "Scripture," though not by name: "Such a one is called a thief by the Scripture; at least it says, Son, do not become a liar, for lying leads to theft." [1] The first mention of it by name we find in Eusebius, who affixes the epithet "so-called" to the title and places it among the νόθα, or

[1] *Strom.*, i. 20; *cf. Did.*, iii. 5.

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spurious writings, by this double stigma indicating its totally uncanonical repute in his day. Athanasius mentions[1] it in the same class with the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, and the Shepherd as "books not canonical, but appointed by the Fathers to be read to those that are just coming to us and desire to be instructed in the doctrine of godliness." A more liberal rule prevailed at Alexandria regarding such books than in other Eastern cities, as is shown by Cyril's earnest exhortation to catechumens to read only the strictly canonical writings. Rufinus, presbyter of Aquilea (d. 410), enumerates[2] among "other books that are not canonical, but are called ecclesiastical by most," the Shepherd, the Judgment of Peter, and the Two Ways, which is an alternative title of the Didache.

The Didache is an interesting early Christian document, discovered and published in 1883 by Bryennios, metropolitan of Nicomedia. It consists of two parts, the first six chapters being designed for catechetical instruction, and the remainder consisting chiefly of liturgical and disciplinary rules. The first part was probably the

[1] Appendix V. [2] Appendix XII.

original document, and was known as the Two Ways. It is largely an echo of the Sermon on the Mount. The liturgical directions are of later date, but cannot have been added much later than 100, for they show an ecclesiastical system like that found in the Epistle of Clement of Rome, and much simpler than the letters of Ignatius disclose. Except that the first part is little more than a chain of quotations from the apostolic Scriptures, it is difficult to understand how any Father should have come to quote it as Scripture, as Clement of Alexandria undoubtedly did, since its quality is so different from the canonical writings. That difference of quality is enough to account for the fact that Clement stands quite solitary in his treatment of the Didache as having the character or authority of Scripture.

A. D. 100

From the groups of "Epistles" in the early Christian literature, two stand out far above their fellows in the estimation of believers. The first Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, as we have seen, was almost certainly written during the lifetime of some of the apostles, and is probably of earlier date than the Gospel or Epistles of John, about contemporary with the

Apocalypse. It was generally believed in the second century to have been the work of the Clement referred to by Paul as a fellow-worker in Rome (Phil. 4 : 3), and there is nothing impossible, or even improbable, in the tradition. That this letter of Clement was for a time so highly esteemed as to be regarded as Scripture, and was read publicly in the churches, there can be no question. The earliest reference to it is by Irenæus, who says:

A. D. 97

> In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition that it had lately received from the apostles. . . From this document, whoever chooses to do so may learn that he, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was preached by the churches, and may also understand the apostolic tradition of the church, since this epistle is of older date than these men who are now propagating falsehood, and who conjure into existence another god beyond the Creator and Maker of all existing things.[1]

Eusebius bears unmistakable testimony to it in the following terms:

> In this same epistle, he [Dionysius of Corinth] makes mention also of Clement's epistle to the Corinthians,

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 3. 3.

showing that it had been from the beginning the custom to read it in the [Corinthian] church. His words are as follows: "To-day we have passed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your epistle. From it, whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, as also from the former epistle, which was written to us through Clement."[1]

In Codex A this epistle is given directly after the regular Canon, showing that in the fifth century it was regarded, to use the distinction of Rufinus, as "ecclesiastical" but not canonical—that is, while it might be read in churches, it was not recognized as Scripture in the full sense. If ever a permanent deutero-canonical collection of New Testament books had developed in the church, as was the case with the Old Testament, this letter of Clement would undoubtedly have led the list.

We have no definite statement for the reasons of its exclusion from the Canon. It could not have been its lack of apostolicity, for Clement was believed to be as much a fellow-worker of the apostles as Mark or Luke.[2] It could not have

[1] H. E., iv. 22. 11.

[2] As good a case of "apostolicity," in the limited sense, can be made out for First Clement as for Hebrews; and nearly as good for the writings of Ignatius and Polycarp. Since none of these became canonical (and there was never even an idea of canonicity in the case of Ignatius and Polycarp) some other test must have caused their rejection. This will be more fully discussed in chap. 10.

been doubts of its authorship, as in the case of Hebrews and Second Peter, for there are no recorded doubts. It must have been the growing perception by the Church that this epistle, by virtue of its own character, did not belong to the same class as either the Pauline or catholic Epistles. And no one who reads the epistle to-day is at all likely to dispute the validity of the decision. Its often fanciful exegesis of the Old Testament does not prepossess one in its favor, and the writer's childlike belief in the fable of the phœnix and other like marvels, is a more serious obstacle to our receiving it, though in the early centuries it is not likely that this objection was strongly felt. Chief of all is the internal evidence borne by the epistle that it is a secondary document, not primary and original, an echo of the canonical Gospels and Epistles. It is on an entirely different spiritual plane from these writings, and as this difference came to be more clearly perceived, its authority declined, in spite of the fact that it contains much excellent religious instruction.

The Epistle of Barnabas was probably composed by an Alexandrian Jew, and was highly valued for a time because of its supposed apostolic

origin. Clement of Alexandria seems to have accepted its authenticity, and to have regarded it as Scripture, for he both included it in his "Hypotyposes" A. D. 150 and quoted it repeatedly in his "Stromata," where he nearly always cites it as the work of the "Apostle Barnabas," and in one case says that the author was "the Apostle Barnabas, and he was one of the seventy, a fellow-worker of Paul." Origen calls it a "catholic epistle," and by his quotations seems to rank it among the sacred Scriptures, yet when he comes to make a list of canonical works he omits it.[1] As, however, we cannot be quite certain that Eusebius has correctly presented Origen's ideas of the Canon, it would not be fair to press that omission too far.

From this time onward its repute seems to have rapidly declined. The conviction grew that it was not the work of the Apostle Barnabas, and Eusebius places it among his list of Notha, or "spurious" writings. Athanasius and Jerome do not describe it as among those edifying writings that are read in church, and so are ecclesiastical though not canonical. The epistle itself suggests the reason for its rejection.

[1] *c. Celsum.*, i. 63.

The authors of the canonical Epistle to the Hebrews and the uncanonical Epistle of Barnabas had the same problem to solve: what was the relation of Judaism to Christianity? They solve it in directly opposite ways. The author of Hebrews shows that the Mosaic system was a series of prophetic symbols of the facts and doctrines of Christianity, and having been fulfilled they have passed away—they were but a shadow of the good things to come, which are now here and possessed by Christian believers. The author of Barnabas, on the contrary, argues that the Judaic system is perpetually valid, but by a spiritual and mystical interpretation he reads back Christianity into Judaism. His absurd exegesis—no more absurd, however, than is to be found in Origen and many other Fathers of this period—his misunderstandings and inaccuracies in his treatment of the Old Testament, his conceited boasting of superior knowledge, are incompatible not merely with the character of Barnabas, but with any high religious value in the writing. It is so much below the letter of Clement in religious insight and spiritual tone that the wonder is how it ever obtained any recognition as Scripture. Probably its Alexandrian

origin is responsible for the respect paid it by Alexandrian Fathers, and there is nothing to show that the rest of the Church ever shared the views of Clement and Origen.

We come now to those books that may be grouped under the general name of "Apocalypses." Of these several attained at least an "ecclesiastical" character. The Muratorian Fragment mentions an Apocalypse of Peter, almost if not quite on a par with the canonical Apocalypse. Until recently, only the name was known to us. Clement of Alexandria included it in his "Hypotyposes"; the *Catalogus Claromontanus,* an Eastern list of the third century, includes it, placing it at the end of the Canon, but Eusebius rejects it emphatically:[1] "As to that which is called the Preaching, and that called the Apocalypse of Peter, we know nothing of their being handed down as catholic writings, since neither among the ancients nor among the ecclesiastical writers of our own day, has there been any one that has appealed to testimony taken from them." Nevertheless, the historian Sozomon testifies[2] considerably later (c. 450) that "the so-called Apocalypse

A. D. 150 (?)

[1] H. E., iii. 3. [2] H. E., vii. 19.

of Peter, which was deemed entirely spurious by the ancients, we have discovered to be read in certain churches of Palestine up to the present day, once a year, on the day of preparation, during which the people most religiously fast in commemoration of the Saviour's passion."

The same parchment discovered in 1886, in Upper Egypt, that contained a fragment of the lost Gospel of Peter, contained also a fragment of the apocalypse ascribed to the same author. If we compare the stern reticence of John's treatment of the wicked with the following extract, a fair sample of more than half of this fragment, we shall understand perfectly the doubts regarding the book mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment, as well as the unhesitating final rejection of a writing whose affinities are with Dante's "Inferno," rather than with canonical Scripture:

> And over against that place I saw another, squalid, and it was the place of punishment; and those who were punished there and the punishing angels had their raiment dark like the air of the place. And there were certain hanging there by the tongue: and these were the blasphemers of the way of righteousness; and under them lay fire, burning and punishing them. And there was a great lake, full of flaming mire, in which were men who pervert righteousness, and tormenting angels afflicted them. . . And I saw the murderers and

those who conspired with them cast into a certain strait place, full of evil snakes, and smitten by those beasts, and thus turning to and fro in that punishment; and worms, as it were clouds of darkness, afflicted them. And the souls of the murdered stood and looked upon the punishment of those murderers and said: O God, thy judgment is just. . . And near those were again women and men gnawing their own lips, and being punished and receiving a red-hot iron in their eyes: and these were they who blasphemed and slandered the way of righteousness.[1]

But of all the books of the apocalyptic nature, the one that had the widest circulation in the church, and came nearest to canonization, was the Shepherd, which we already have had occasion to mention frequently. No doubt the confusing of the Hermas believed to be its author with the Hermas mentioned by Paul in his salutations to the church at Rome (Rom. 16 : 14) had much to do with this, but the character of the book still more explains its vogue. The same qualities that made the Apocalypse of John so highly esteemed in the West in an age of persecution, and that gained even for the Apocalypse of Peter an adventitious and temporary favor, made the Shepherd an extremely popular book in the East, where it was chiefly known, read, and admired.

A. D. 160

[1] ANF, ix : 145, 146.

Even in the West, however, it was known and highly esteemed by some, for Irenæus quotes[1] it as "Scripture"; but Irenæus is a Western Father only in the sense that he spent his active life in Gaul. In education, feeling, thought, he was Eastern; and in this case, it is an Eastern judgment that he reflects. Tertullian, who is more truly Western, rejects the book contemptuously, calling it "that Shepherd of Adulterers," and elsewhere more formally records his objection to it: "But I would yield my ground to you if the writing of the Shepherd, which is the only one that favors adulterers, had deserved to find a place in the divine Canon; if it had not been habitually judged by every council of churches (even of your own) among apocryphal and false [writings]. I, however, imbibe the Scriptures of that Shepherd who cannot be broken." But it is easy to understand the cause of Tertullian's hostility: the Shepherd is unmistakably anti-Montanistic in teaching, and he could therefore see no good in it. Yet the author of the Muratorian Canon, who has no such prejudice, says distinctly that while the book should be read (he evidently means privately), "it can never be publicly used

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, iv. 20. 2.

in the church, either among the prophets . . . or the apostles." [1] In the second century, therefore, the West was decidedly unfavorable to the canonizing of the Shepherd.

Nevertheless, the book long continued to enjoy peculiar favor, especially in the East. In Alexandria it seems to have been especially valued. Clement quotes it or refers to it, three times by the author's name, and several times more by title only. Though he does not expressly cite it as Scripture, he quotes it in connection with Scripture, with no indication of any difference of quality or authority. In some cases his language cannot be taken to mean less than approval of the book as inspired, as where he says, "Divinely, therefore, the power which spoke to Hermas by revelation, said, 'The visions and revelations are for those who are of double mind, who doubt in their hearts if these things are so or not.'" [2]

Origen is yet more plain spoken in his approval. He does not hesitate to say of the Shepherd, in his commentary on Rom. 16 : 4: "I think that Hermas is the author of the tract which is called the Shepherd, a writing that seems to me very useful and, as I think, divinely inspired."

[1] Appendix I. [2] *Strom.*, 29; *cf.*, *Shep. Vis.*, ii. 4.

This may be taken as Origen's personal opinion that the book was worthy of a place in the Canon, but he does not testify that it was actually received as canonical in his time. On the contrary, if we may trust the accuracy of Eusebius, when Origen comes to make a list of the canonical books, he pointedly omits the Shepherd. And in his commentary on Matthew, he prefixes this cautious statement to a quotation: "If one should dare, using a Scripture which is in circulation in the Church, but not acknowledged by all to be divine." This passage from Origen seems to be much less known, at any rate it is far less frequently quoted, than the other given above.

By the time of Eusebius, the status of the book as extra-canonical seems to have become definitely fixed, for he puts it among the "spurious" books, though in another passage he speaks somewhat more favorably of it: "This too has been disputed by some, and on their account cannot be placed among the acknowledged books; while by others it is considered quite indispensable, especially to those who need instruction in the elements of the faith. Hence, as we know, it has been publicly read in the churches, and I have

found that some of the most ancient writers used it." [1] So late as the close of this century, Athanasius for the East and Rufinus [2] for the West, testify that the Shepherd is still considered to be an edifying book, and is even read in churches, but is not canonical in the full sense. The MSS testify that this usage continued for some time. The *Codex Claromontanus,* belonging to the seventh century, places the Epistle of Barnabas before the Revelation of John, and after the Revelation gives the Shepherd, Acts of Paul, and Revelation of Peter.

A book that was so long regarded in the Church as second only to Scripture, if not itself to be received as Scripture, is certainly worthy of respectful study. Indeed, the formation of the Canon may be said to have turned on this book. The Shepherd begins with a series of visions, five in number. In the first, a woman named Rhoda, whose slave Hermas formerly was, appears to him and reproaches him for his impure passion

[1] H. E., iii. 5.

[2] Jerome, a contemporary of Rufinus, writes as follows: "Hermas, whom the Apostle Paul mentions in writing to the Romans, . . is reputed to be the author of the book which is called Pastor, and which is also read publicly in some churches of Greece. It is in fact a useful book, and many of the ancient authors quote from it as authority, but among the Latins it is almost unknown" (*De Vir., Ill.* ch. x).

for her. She then withdraws into the heavens, leaving him overwhelmed with his newly roused sense of guilt, when an aged woman appears to him, whom he discovers to be the Church. In three successive visions, the Church growing and spreading, the Church purified by suffering, and the terrors of the judgment are shown to him and expounded by this aged woman. The fifth vision is something more than a vision (ὅρασις), it is a Revelation (ἀποκάλυψις). The "Shepherd, the angel of repentance" now appears, and delivers to Hermas twelve Mandates and ten Similitudes, which he is charged to write down. This is the main feature of the book, for which the visions are only introductory and preparatory. There is much sound Christian doctrine in the writing and excellent ethical teaching, but this is intermingled with so much that is fanciful, even absurd and grotesque, that one of our age can only wonder how his fellow-Christians could ever have found edification in the reading of it.

The Shepherd has been called the "Pilgrim's Progress" of the early Church, but except that Bunyan used a framework of fiction, and put his religious teaching into similitudes, there is no point of contact between them. Indeed, no com-

parison of two works in literature could be more inept and misleading. Bishop Lightfoot compared it to Dante's "Divine Comedy," and suggested that the function of Rhoda is like that of Beatrice, but the learned bishop was evidently a better scholar than literary critic. Comparisons like these do not illuminate, they merely mislead, and one who is induced by them to undertake the reading of the Shepherd, in the hope of finding in it something of the supreme literary gift of Dante and Bunyan, will be deeply disappointed. The one thing he will be unable to understand is, how any Christian of good sense should ever have been willing to accept this book as Scripture. That it was so accepted for several generations by a considerable part of the Church, measures better than any other fact the spiritual insight and literary discernment of those times.

As to these rejected books, taken as a class, what have we discovered by our inquiry? That for a time, longer or shorter in each case, they were quoted as Scripture by some Fathers, while others as pointedly declined to accept their authority. That in a region, larger or smaller, they were read in the churches along with the canonical writings, as at least useful and edifying books.

That doubts regarding their canonicity can in some cases be traced from their earliest attestations, and that such doubts, once started, continue to grow until they become convictions. That the final rejection of these books was practically unanimous—East and West, in spite of their numerous and growing differences about other matters, being in cordial agreement on this question. That, so far as any evidence yet examined goes to show, this was the gradually formed, unforced decision of the churches and Fathers, acting with little or no concert. That this final decision is amply accounted for and justified by the character of the rejected books themselves. The hypothesis of rejection by ecclesiastical authority is entirely gratuitous and unnecessary, as well as unsustained by fact.

VIII

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

VIII

NO reader can have failed to note the recurrence, in the preceding chapters, of the phrase "read in the churches." It is not the sole appeal, but it is the constant appeal of those Fathers that discuss the canonicity of any book. What is the significance of that phrase? What are we fairly entitled to infer from the use of those words by the Fathers, down to the middle of the fifth century?

Negatively, we can infer that there had been no official decision concerning the canonicity of doubtful books. It is true that a passage already quoted from Tertullian seems to contradict this inference. He says that the Shepherd had "been habitually judged by every council of churches (even of your own) among apocryphal and false [writings]." But Tertullian is here obviously rhetorical, and he specifies no such councils which, in any case, must have been mere local synods and therefore void of authority beyond their own immediate jurisdiction. And there is a difference also between a synod's deciding that a certain

book should not be received as Scripture, and a synod's making a general decree on the Canon. No evidence remains that, up to Tertullian's day, there had been any such decree, and the evidence is overwhelming that there had not. Besides, it is quite possible that we have not the true original reading here in Tertullian's text, which is admittedly corrupt and demands frequent emendation. His phrase *ab omni concilia ecclesiarum* (by every council of churches) may easily have been *ab omni consilio,* "by the general judgment of churches," which is accordant with the facts as we know them, while the text that has come down to us contradicts every other source of information about this period.

Positively, we may infer that, down to the middle of the fifth century, the question of canonicity had been a question for the churches to decide, and that they had in fact decided it, each for itself. Canonicity was a question of usage, and each church had its own usage, which it settled quite independently, so far as any external authority was concerned, but with some decent regard for the usages elsewhere prevailing. Alexandria had one usage, Antioch another, Carthage had traditions of her own, and Rome's

were different still. But there was a growing tendency toward assimilation and uniformity of usage, which by the end of the fourth century had settled the question of the Canon, as the simultaneous testimony of Athanasius for the East and Jerome and Augustine for the West, fully assures us. Only when the churches had thus reached a full agreement, on the basis of independent action, did councils begin to speak, and what they spoke was avowedly nothing but a confirmation of usage and doctrine already existing.

But before we examine these conciliar declarations, in which the voice of authority spoke, there is another interesting question to consider, How was the usage of each church settled? Whose voice was potent in deciding what books should be read, and which should not? It may as well be admitted at the outset that data for the satisfactory answering of this question are wanting. We have a little evidence, but it is soon exhausted, and then we must have recourse to conjecture. The very word sends a shiver along the conservative spine, but there is conjecture and conjecture. Mere haphazard guessing is not only useless, but quite certain to be harmful, in all historic investigation. On the other hand, conjecture that is

the mere prolongation into the unknown of lines of evidence clearly drawn, in accordance with other known facts and rational principles, almost deserves to be called an addition to our solid knowledge.

The danger of this process consists in the constant temptation that besets the investigator to prolong some one line of evidence, to the exclusion of all others, until this hypothesis so takes possession of the mind that evidence to the contrary cannot be appreciated, and is even unconsciously distorted. A flagrant instance of this will presently be given.

The most influential persons in the early Christian communities were the bishops. From the time of Ignatius they were considered the center of unity and authority. In the settlement of questions of this sort their voices would necessarily be potent, in many cases decisive. When they were men of exceptional force of personality or repute for learning, their advice was often sought by other churches. But the bishop of the second century was not an autocrat; he was president of a council of presbyters, of whom he was chief, not despot. He had to convince the presbyters of the wisdom of his decisions before

they became the decisions of the church. Ignatius, who so magnifies the episcopate as to enjoin the churches to which he writes to "do nothing without the bishop," also recognizes the importance of the presbyters. "For your justly renowned presbytery," he writes to the Ephesians, "worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung." [1] And to the Trallians he writes, "It is therefore necessary that, as indeed ye do, so without the bishop ye should do nothing, but should also be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ." And again,[2] "He who does anything apart from the bishop, and presbytery, and deacons, such a man is not pure in his conscience."

And if it be objected that the formation of the Canon was long subsequent to Ignatius, when the episcopate had greatly enlarged its functions and power, it may be replied that this idea of the relations of presbyters and bishops did not cease in the Church for several centuries. We find Irenæus exhorting in precisely the same strain, "Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presby-

[1] Chap. IV. [2] Chap. II.

ters who are in the Church." "For these also" he says[1] again of the presbyters, "preserve this faith of ours in the one God . . . and they expound the Scriptures to us without danger, neither blaspheming God, nor dishonoring the patriarchs, nor despising the prophets." And to insure his orthodoxy, as we have seen before, every believer is exhorted to read the Scriptures "diligently in company with those who are presbyters in the Church." Irenæus uniformly and consistently makes the presbyters, not the bishop, prominent in this public reading and exposition of the Scriptures, the authority to which the layman may confidently turn for guidance. The administrative function was long a more important feature of the episcopate than the teaching function, and the bishops were better financiers and organizers than they were preachers. And so late as Cyprian's day, at least, presbyters retained so much independence that they sometimes violated the Ignatian injunction, "do nothing without the bishop"; for we find Cyprian writing a rather indignant letter to the presbyters and deacons who, without the bishop's concurrence, had "claimed to themselves entire authority" and

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, iv. 26. 2.

admitted some of the "lapsed" to communion with the Church.[1]

In the second century, and even later, the laymen were a force that had to be reckoned with. Among the famous Christian writers during the formative period of the Canon, included in all editions of the Fathers, were Aristides and Justin and Athenagoras and Lactantius—all laymen. As for the actual influence of presbyters, even so late as the fifth century, let such names as Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, Rufinus, speak. Generally, however, Father means bishop, because the learning and ability that would qualify one to write books of lasting value usually marked a man out for election to the episcopate. But it is qualities of mind and heart that rank men among the Fathers of the church, not possession of official rank.

Now since the bulk of patristic writings is of episcopal origin, we may fairly expect to find such writers magnifying their office, at least as

[1] Cyprian, Ep. ix. It might be thought to be pressing the matter hard to quote here again the evidence previously cited, of presbyterial activity in the circulation of early Christian literature, from the Shepherd, Vis., ii. 4. Even if this is a fiction, as far as the reference to Clement is concerned, Grapte was evidently a presbyter, and was enjoined to read the book to the Roman Christians.

much as hard facts would allow. What specific instances do we find, then, in the matter of direct episcopal interference with the churches in this question of canonicity? No more than two, and these of more than doubtful relevance. They have been already mentioned, but here demand more thorough examination. The first is the

A. D. 190

case of Serapion, bishop of Antioch about 190. There was a dispute in the parish of Rhossus, in Syria, regarding the reading of the Gospel of Peter. When their bishop visited them, they asked him about it, and he, not having read the book, said, "If this is the only thing that occasions dispute among you, let it be read." But later, having read the book carefully and found that it contained Docetic heresy, he says, "I will hasten to come to you again. Therefore, brethren, expect me shortly." So much we learn from Eusebius, but we do not learn from him or from any other source how the matter was adjusted. The bishop's decision in the first instance seems rather a matter of advice than of judicial authority, and on his second visit he would reverse his advice and do what he could to have the book excluded from public reading. Very likely he was successful, but that we do not

know, still less do we know that he succeeded by the exercise of episcopal authority. A bishop in the year 190 was not the bishop of the year 490.

The other case of episcopal interference is that of Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, in Syria, about 450. His story, in his own words, is herewith reproduced in full: A. D. 450

> Tatian also composed the Gospel called Diatessaron, removing the genealogies, and all the other passages which show that Christ was born of David according to the flesh. This was used, not only by the members of his party, but even by those who followed the apostolic doctrine, as they did not perceive the evil design of the composition, but used the book in their simplicity for its conciseness. And I found also myself more than two hundred such books in our churches, which had been received with respect; and having gathered all together, I caused them to be laid aside, and introduced in their place the Gospels of the four evangelists.[1]

The language is significant—"caused them to be laid aside." No doubt he did just that, but

[1] This case of Theodoret and the Diatessaron is the only instance on record of the destruction of Christian literature—if, as some think, these copies were destroyed (Theodoret himself only says "laid aside"). When other books perished, so far as we know, they did so by a natural process. They disappeared because they were little valued. Could the Gospel according to the Egyptians, for example, ever have perished if it had been esteemed like the canonical four—or anything within reasonable distance of such esteem? The very fact of disappearance is emphatic testimony to the relative worthlessness of a book.

only after he had convinced the several churches, by due instruction, that the Diatessaron ought not to be substituted for the four Gospels. Even in 450 the power of the bishop, though greatly increased, was by no means despotic; the presbyters could still make themselves heard. And in any event, this transaction has no bearing on the history of the Canon, for virtual unanimity regarding the canonical books had been reached before Theodoret's episcopate began.

Only one obsessed by a theory that has become what the French call an *idée fixe,* can find in the patristic literature that the Canon was settled by the apostolical authority of the bishops. And even obsession is hardly a valid excuse for absolute misrepresentation of the patristic evidence. Tertullian's somewhat arrogant, "I am the heir of the apostles," has called forth this comment: "Who is the 'I'? Manifestly the organization centering in the office of the bishops."[1] Manifestly it is nothing of the sort. Tertullian is not a bishop, and is not at all concerned to uphold episcopal authority. He is arguing with heretics like Marcion who, he says, have no right to cite the Scriptures. To such, any orthodox be-

[1] Ferris, p. 176.

liever, like himself, may rejoin, "This is my property. . . I am the heir of the apostles."[1] All the fuss about this "dictatorial I" of Tertullian is an utter perversion of his language.

Even worse is the use made of a passage from Irenæus. "It was a fiat and not an investigation that gave to the world the final decision. . . The church that issued the fiat had not the strength in the second century which it had in the sixteenth, or else the question of the Canon might have been settled much sooner. But the command went forth. 'And therefore it was said to Daniel the prophet, Shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of consummation, until many learn and knowledge be completed.'"[2] A reference in the margin to "Irenæus, IV. 26. 1," as well as the context, will naturally convey to the reader's mind the idea that Irenæus quotes these words from Daniel as a command to the Church, and that "seal the book" means to Irenæus "close the Canon." One cannot believe that an impression so utterly at variance with fact was intentionally conveyed. For what Irenæus does say, as anybody will discover who verifies the reference, is this: Christ is con-

[1] *De Praescr. Haer.*, 19. [2] Ferris, pp. 189, 190.

tained in the Old Testament Scriptures, he is the treasure hidden in the field. His nature was pointed out by types and parables and could not be understood in advance of his manifestation. "And therefore it was said to Daniel, Shut up the words," etc. What a literary offense it is to apply these words to the Canon, whether of the New Testament or the Old, needs no further demonstration.

But worse still, if worse be possible, is the interpretation that has been put on "a luminous passage" of Tertullian, to make his words bear out a theory of a Roman origin of the Canon. Tertullian has already shown in his treatise that Christ first delivered the faith, the apostles spread it, and it has descended through apostolic churches, to whom alone the Scriptures belong. He then addresses the heretics in his rhetorical fashion:[1]

> Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your own salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, [in

[1] *De Praescr. Haer.*, 36.

which] you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. ((Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes into our hands the very authority [of apostles themselves]. How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! Where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's! Where Paul wins his crown in a death like John's! Where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island exile! See what she has learned, what taught, what fellowship has had with even [our] churches in Africa! One Lord God does she acknowledge, the creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus [born] of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God, the Creator; and the resurrection of the flesh; the law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith.)) This she seals with the water [of baptism], arrays with the Holy Ghost, feeds with the Eucharist, cheers with martyrdom, and against such a discipline thus maintained she admits no gainsayer. This is the discipline which I no longer say foretold that heresies should come, but from which they proceeded.

Of this passage only the sentences enclosed in double parentheses are quoted by Doctor Ferris, or his interpretation could not have been maintained for an instant. Tertullian is speaking of Rome, as the context shows, merely as the most honored and honorable of the apostolic churches, the brightest star in a glorious galaxy. What he

says of Rome is obviously true of all the other churches. "The law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith," is no more said of Rome, in any exclusive sense, than the possession of the sacraments is ascribed exclusively to her in the next sentence. Indeed, Tertullian had done his best to prevent any such misunderstanding of his meaning, by saying earlier in his treatise, "Wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, there will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof and all the Christian traditions." But of course Tertullian could not foresee how anxiously his works would be searched one day for evidence of something that is not there.

The only sound conclusion from the evidence accessible is, therefore, that down to the final "closing" of the Canon—which means only, the time when it was definitely decided just what books should be received as constituting the New Testament—no one class and no one locality decided anything. The clergy as a whole were doubtless the chief agency through which a decision was reached. However, we can rather be certain of this on general principles, because the

clergy were the chief agency through which all ecclesiastical questions were decided, than assured by the aid of any specific and convincing proofs. Like the growth of liturgy, of a church calendar, or the use of vestments, the Canon must be viewed as part of the gradual, orderly, and slow development of ecclesiastical usages that we can trace more or less clearly through the first five centuries. The clergy as a whole, rather than the bishops alone, were influential in all these things. But because we read little of them, we should make a great mistake to assume hastily that the laymen, the great silent host of believers, had no influence in these matters. By their approval or disapproval, sometimes expressed with tumult and violence, they played their part in what was done. One has only to read the life of Chrysostom to learn that the laity could make themselves felt on occasion, and that a bishop who attempted to override their will, even when he was in the right, was courting disaster. In the matter of the Canon, the Christian believers of all ranks were led, not driven—of that we may be quite certain.

When the voice of authority is first heard speaking plainly in the Church, it is not an episco-

pal voice, but the voice of synods, in which the lower clergy also were represented. In spite of Tertullian's apparent assertion to the contrary, we have no record of a synod that considered the question of the Canon, directly or indirectly, before the synod of Laodicea, held in 363.[1] That this body took some action regarding the Canon is certain, but its precise decision is unknown to us, as the extant text of canon [2] fifty-nine is admitted by most scholars to be in part spurious. The canon begins,[3] "Let no private psalms [4] be read in the church, nor uncanonized books, but only the canonical [books] of the New and Old Testament." The list then

A. D. 363

[1] Few testimonies regarding these early councils or synods can be gleaned from the Fathers. In addition to the one already quoted from Tertullian, he says again: "Besides, throughout the provinces of Greece there are held in definite localities those councils gathered out of the catholic churches, by whose means not only all the deeper questions are handled for the common benefit, but the actual representation of the whole Christian name is celebrated with great veneration." *De Jejun.*, 13. The context shows that these synods were for the preservation of orthodoxy, chiefly. Eusebius testifies to the same effect: "For the faithful in Asia met often in many places throughout Asia to consider this matter, and examined the novel utterances and pronounced them profane, and thus these persons [Montanists] were expelled from the Church and debarred from communication." H. E., v. 16. 10.

[2] Here we have "canon" used in the common ecclesiastical sense of a rule enacted by a synod or council, for the guidance of all in matters of discipline and administration.

[3] Appendix IV.

[4] Private psalms probably means psalms composed by "private" (*i. e.*, uninspired) persons. Later the use of hymns was authorized.

follows, first of the Old Testament books, then of the New—the latter corresponding to our present Canon, with the omission of the Apocalypse. Both of these catalogues are omitted altogether in some Greek MSS of the canons, and are written in a different hand, often in different colored ink, from the canon above quoted. They are also omitted in most of the MS versions of the canons, as the Latin and Syriac. It is considerations like these that make scholars pronounce the lists to be of more than doubtful authenticity.

But, in any case, this is perfectly clear: the synod of Laodicea attempted no new legislation. The canon adopted recognizes the fact that there is already in existence a collection of books, generally recognized as fitting to be read in the public worship of the churches, which are known as the "canonized" or "canonical" books. If the catalogues are genuine, they simply give the names of these books, already received as authoritative in the churches represented in this synod. This first word of the voice of authority, therefore, is no more than an official recognition of what is already a well-established ecclesiastical usage. We could not reasonably have expected

anything else. The bishops and clergy in council will of course say what the bishops and clergy have for years been saying in their several churches.

The second time that we hear the voice of authority, it comes from Athanasius, the great bishop of Alexandria, the foremost theologian and bishop the fourth century produced—and that was the century also of the two Gregories (of Nazianzen and Nyssa) and of Basil and of Chrysostom. Athanasius was accustomed to send an encyclical letter each year shortly before Easter to the churches subject to him, as not only bishop but also as metropolitan. These became known as his Festal Letters, and they contain counsel, command, exhortation, regarding the proper celebration of Easter. In one of the letters of the series,[1] for the year 367, he had occasion to warn his people against certain "fabricated" books, by which they were liable to be led astray. It seems good to him, therefore, he says to them, to set before them "the books included in the Canon, and handed down and accredited as divine." Thereupon follows his catalogue, first

A. D. 367

[1] Appendix V.

of the Old Testament, then of the New. The latter is the first formal list, from any source, that exactly agrees with our New Testament, neither admitting any book not found there, nor rejecting (or even expressing any doubts concerning) any book that is found there. When we are told that our New Testament Canon comes to us from Rome, and that it would have been a very different collection if it had proceeded from Alexandria, let us recall to mind that it is this renowned bishop of Alexandria who gives us the first list of the canonical books of the New Testament that is identical with those that we possess to-day.

One other voice of authority we hear from the fourth century. The third provincial council, or synod, of Carthage was held in the year 397. The great theologian Augustine was present and took part in its deliberations. This synod also adopted a canon regarding the Scriptures:[1] "It was also determined that besides the canonical Scriptures nothing be read in the Church under the title of divine Scriptures. The canonical Scriptures are these." Then follows the catalogue of both Old and New Testaments, the latter precisely agree-

[1] Appendix X.

ing with that of Athanasius and our own. It will be seen, however, as at Laodicea, there is no case here of a dispute as to what the Canon should be, followed by an authoritative decision. The council tells us plainly that there is an already accepted Canon. But, as we have previously learned from numerous sources, other books were also read in the churches, and this canon is intended to put a stop to that practice and confine the public reading exclusively to the canonical books. We learn, however, from Rufinus, that this object was not attained, for even in the next century other books were publicly read, though not as equal to the canonical books.[1]

A. D. 397

This canon of Carthage has not only ecclesiastical but historical authority. It is an unimpeachable witness to the fact that the formation of the Canon is complete, and that it has been formed by the Christian churches. The canon is avowedly based on the everywhere accepted Christian tradition concerning these books, and rests on no other sort of authority than universal tradition. It has ecclesiastical authority, because, although this is in itself the voice of a provincial

[1] Appendix XII.

synod only, it was sent to the bishop of Rome for his concurrence. "Let this be made known also to our brother and fellow-priest Boniface," the canon continues, "for the purpose of confirming that canon, because we have received from our fathers that those books must be read in the Church." That such confirmation was given there is no reason to doubt, though no record has been preserved of it; and by such approval the voice of this synod became of nearly as much moral weight—throughout the churches of the West, at least—as if it were the decision of an ecumenical council.

This remained the doctrine of the Church regarding the Canon down to the Reformation and the Council of Trent. Whenever the voice of authority spoke again, it was merely to confirm what was said at Carthage. No more authoritative ecclesiastical body uttered its voice before the Council of Trent, where for the first time a council professing to be ecumenical, and in fact representing the entire Catholic Church of the West, set forth an official and final decision regarding the Canon. It is necessary, however, to take some account of a statement somewhat widely diffused, though not in books of real

authority, that an earlier ecumenical council did define the Canon—namely, the council held in Constantinople in 692, and known by various titles, the "Trullan," the "Quinsext." It is true that this gathering aspired to be the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and was accepted as such in the East, but in the West its authority was rejected, and the second council of Nice (787) is there reckoned as the Seventh Ecumenical. It is evident that the canons of such an ecclesiastical body cannot be fairly called ecumenical, and that they are as devoid of historical authority as of moral weight.

But waiving this point, this council said nothing explicitly about the Canon of Scripture. Its action on that subject is wholly inferential: it did, in canon II of its acts, ratify the canons adopted by a number of provincial synods named, including that of Carthage.[1] Whence, it might be concluded, this council gave the seal of its approval to what that synod enacted about the Canon of Scripture. But if the council did this, it did a great deal more—a great deal too much, indeed—for it also confirmed the Canon of Laodicea, and this (if genuine) does not agree with

[1] Appendix XVI.

the Canon of Carthage. But worse yet, the Trullan canon confirms the so-called Apostolic Canons, and the "canons" or decretal letters of Athanasius, Amphilochius, and Gregory Theologus (Nazianzen); and each of these authorities gives a list of canonical Scriptures that do not agree with each other. Here we have five New Testament Canons inferentially confirmed, of which only that of Athanasius agrees with the Canon of Carthage. The Trullan council, instead of deciding anything about the New Testament Canon, only threw the whole matter into inextricable confusion.[1]

A. D. 692

There are several papal utterances on the subject of the Canon that would be of value, as tending to settle the question for the West, if we could be certain, in the first place, of their genuineness, and secondly whether they come within the scope of the Vatican definition of infallibility. The earliest is a letter, or decretal, purporting to have been written by Innocent I about the year 405, and gives a list of canonical books corresponding

A. D. 405

[1] See documents IV-VIII in the Appendix. The Apostolic Canons omit the Apocalypse and add the two letters of Clement; Amphilochius is doubtful of more than three catholic Epistles and rejects the Apocalypse; Gregory rejects the Apocalypse.

to the Canon of Carthage, with this additional admonition: that all other books circulating under the names of apostles, are to be not only repudiated but condemned. But this is apparently not instruction from the chair of Peter in which the pope speaks as pastor and teacher of the whole Church, and consequently it can claim no infallible character. Such a decision becomes binding in the Roman Catholic Church as a matter of discipline, but is not an article of faith. And, as has been intimated, scholars regard the document as of more than doubtful authenticity.

Another decretal is attributed to Pope Gelasius and contains the same list. It is supposed to have been prepared a little before the year 500, but has suffered various alterations, so that it is impossible to say precisely what was its original form. In its present state it may be as late as the tenth century. It can be taken, therefore, only to represent the continuance during the Middle Ages of that tradition of the Canon established by the synod of Carthage. This decretal is subject to the same interpretation, as to its infallible authority, as that of Innocent.

A. D. 496

A third papal utterance, of undoubted authen-

ticity, is the bull of Eugene IV, addressed in 1441 to the Council of Florence, in which he defines the belief of the holy Roman Church with regard to the Scriptures. This document is open to the same question as to its infallible character, since it is not addressed to the whole church.[1] A. D. 1441

While, therefore, it may be said with confidence that the Church of the West continued from the fifth century to receive as the Scriptures of the New Testament the Canon approved at Carthage, it may be said with equal confidence that this continuance was based on ecclesiastical usage and not on ecclesiastical authority. The same influences that produced the Canon maintained it. The whole Church had on trial for three centuries the writings that any Christian had esteemed to be Scripture, as having claims either from supposed apostolic authorship, or by virtue of their edificatory value, to be received as of divine origin and to be used in the worship of God and the instruction of the people. Gradually, by the process of full proof of all, and the cautious acceptance of some and the exclusion of others, the entire Church, East and West, was

[1] For the last three documents in full, see Appendix.

brought to complete and peaceful unanimity—almost the one subject upon which the East and West did fully agree in the long history of Christianity. That such was the fact was practically confessed by the Council of Trent in its action in the matter, for, if the question of the Canon had been authoritatively decided before, there would have been no necessity for a decree on that subject. So far as the New Testament was concerned, the decree of Trent established as an article of faith what had then been the usage of the church for a thousand years. Henceforth no member of the Roman Church could question the canonicity of any book of our New Testament without incurring anathema.

A. D. 1546

To prevent any possible misapprehension, it should perhaps be added that there was no issue between the Reformers and the Catholics regarding the New Testament Canon. A few scholars on either side had shown a disposition to revive the early doubts about James and Second Peter and the Apocalypse, but not one proposed to drop a book from the Canon. There was therefore no objection to the Trent decree on the New Testament Canon, save the objection that any scholar

feels to having questions of historical fact settled by the vote of ecclesiastics, whose ignorance in too many cases makes their opinion on the issues involved absolutely worthless. The erection of what ought always to remain an opinion, however firmly held, into an article of faith is also objectionable in itself.

The issue that Protestantism did raise with the Roman Church about the Canon concerned what the Protestants have always called the Old Testament Apocrypha—books written by Jews, before the time of Christ, but never clearly accepted as canonical by the Jews, nor in the early church. Many of these were quoted by the early Fathers as Scripture, and they were included in the Old Testament catalogue by the synod of Carthage, included in the Vulgate by Jerome, approved by Augustine, and had been regarded as Scripture for a thousand years before the Reformation began. To discuss the reasons why Protestants declined to accept these Apocrypha, and why the Council of Trent affirmed them to be canonical, with an anathema upon all who should reject them, is a matter entirely without the scope of this inquiry. It is only noticed at all to make perfectly clear the nature of the exact issue re-

garding the Canon in the sixteenth century. Since the fifth century, the whole Christian world, with practical unanimity, Greek, Roman, and Protestant, has accepted the same Canon of the New Testament and firmly holds it to-day.

Most Protestant creeds and Confessions have not felt it necessary to insert a precise definition of the Canon of the New Testament. Of the Confessions appearing before the Westminster, only two, composed in the French language—the Gallican (1559) and the Belgic (1561)—contain a list of the canonical books. Though nearly all insist upon the supremacy of Scripture, they take it for granted that all are agreed as to what constitutes Scripture; and, as to the New Testament, that assumption was undoubtedly true and rendered a catalogue a superfluity. Nevertheless, the Westminster Confession (1647), with its minute precision of statement, took nothing for granted, but gave the usual list of received books. Having heard this, we have listened to the last word spoken by the voice of authority.

IX

THE TESTIMONY OF THE MSS AND VERSIONS

IX

WE have now to consider a class of evidence that is valuable for the illustration and confirmation that it yields to the results already reached in our inquiry. A few specially significant facts have already been cited from this kind of evidence, but it has seemed more likely to produce its full effect, and less likely to lead to mental confusion, if examined in the mass than if it had been given in detail as we proceeded. This is the indirect and undesigned evidence to the history of the Canon given by the Greek MSS of the New Testament and the early versions made in the various languages in use in the Roman empire.

Constantine, when he was not performing the functions of a heathen Pontifex Maximus, delighted to pose as a Christian emperor. Diocletian, his predecessor, had covered himself and his reign with infamy by persecution of the Christians; Constantine showed them every favor. Diocletian had endeavored to destroy their sacred books; Constantine bethought him that a

present of such books to the churches would be a most acceptable gift. Accordingly, about the year 331, he wrote to Eusebius the historian, requesting that the bishop have prepared for him "fifty copies (*σωμάτια*) of the Holy Scriptures." Then follows an ambiguous clause: *ὧν μάλιστα τὴν τ'ἐπισκεύην καὶ τὴν κρῆσιν τῶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας λόγῳ ἀναγκαίαν εἶναι γεγνώσκεις*—which may be rendered, "the preparation and use of which you know to be most useful for the instruction of the Church," or, "the preparation and use of which you know to be most useful in the judgment of the Church." The Greek will bear either rendering equally well, and either rendering agrees equally with the context, so that it is impossible to decide which the emperor meant. If we knew that he meant the sense given by the second rendering, the making of these copies would have a most important bearing on the history of the Canon. By following such an injunction Eusebius would have done much to fix the Canon, for of course the contents of the MSS would be perpetuated in copies scattered throughout the East.

In any case, the making of these fifty copies and their presentation to as many different churches must have had a great effect; but we

can only guess what sort of effect, since Eusebius omits to tell us a word about the contents of these MSS, though he adds some other details that are more amusing than instructive. The emperor authorized the use of two public carriages for the conveyance to him of these MSS, which shows that they must have been bulky; and asks Eusebius to send them in care of one of his deacons, "who on his arrival here shall experience my liberality." The copies were duly made and sent to the emperor in "magnificently and elaborately bound volumes of a threefold and fourfold form." What Eusebius meant by this description still puzzles the learned. Some think that this describes the parchment leaves, arranged according to the custom of the time in quarternions and ternions, that is, in sets or quires of three or four double sheets. Others think that this refers to the number of columns of writing on a page, some MSS of this period having three and others four. If we knew what Eusebius meant here, and what the emperor meant by his directions, we should be much aided in the solution of several problems that are at present insoluble.

For not a few scholars believe, though they

cannot prove, that we have now in our possession at least one of these very copies made by Eusebius under the direction of Constantine. This is the Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete MS of the New Testament. The story of its discovery is one of the most romantic tales of modern times and will bear repeating. In 1844 Constantine Tischendorf, then a *privatdocent* in the University of Leipzig, made a visit to the monastery of St. Catherine, at Mount Sinai, where he had heard that there was a library containing some interesting old manuscripts. He found one day in a waste-basket forty-three leaves of an old MS, and at his earnest request the monks gave them to him, instead of lighting fires with them as they had intended. They proved to contain a portion of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. He made every effort to obtain the remainder of the MS, but the monks became suspicious and denied that there were any more leaves. At a subsequent visit, in 1853, he was unsuccessful in his effort to discover more, though he firmly believed more to be in existence. At a third visit, in 1859, he was more fortunate, and discovered the whole of the New Testament, as well as the remainder of the Septuagint.

Tischendorf has eloquently described his surprise and joy when he realized the character and great value of his discovery; and he spent the whole night in making a copy of the Epistle of Barnabas, of which, till then, the Greek original had been unknown. His attempt to make a copy of the New Testament portion for publication was thwarted by the ignorance and suspicion of the monks, and nearly eight months were consumed in negotiations before they would consent to part with their treasure. Finally, however, it was given to him to be taken to Leipzig and published, after which it was to be presented to the emperor of Russia in the name of the monks. The emperor accepted the "present," but, understanding well the Oriental custom of gift-making, sent them in return a "present" equivalent to six thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars of our money. The transaction bears a suspicious resemblance to a sale of the MS for a good round price; but, though the above facts are matters of official record, the monks now say that it was stolen from them. The MS is one of the chief treasures of the imperial library at St. Petersburg, and by the liberality of the Russian government a facsimile edition has

been published that puts the text at the disposal of all Christian scholars.

This MS is thirteen and one-half inches in length by fourteen and seven-eighths inches high, and is beautifully written in the uncial hand of the fourth century (*i. e.*, in square capital letters), four columns to a page, of forty-nine lines to the column. Besides the entire New Testament, it contains the Epistle of Barnabas and a large part of the Shepherd. Both come after the Canon, and though evidently intended to be read in the churches, were as evidently considered not to be in the same class with the preceding books. The order of the canonical books is not only curious in itself, but throws an interesting sidelight on the question of canonicity. First, of course, come the four Gospels; next, the Epistles of Paul, with Hebrews following Second Thessalonians; then the Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and the Revelation. As the Catholic Epistles and Revelation were precisely the last part of the Canon to be fully accepted, there was a manifest propriety in their being placed last of all.

B. D. 333 (?)

We cannot, of course, be certain that this is one of the fifty MSS prepared under the direc-

tion of Eusebius, but the characters in which it is written prove that it is a MS of the fourth century, and it may well have been one of these very copies. One strong confirmation of this view is this: there cannot have been made in the fourth century a large number of MSS so extensive and so costly as this was, aside from the copies prepared under the imperial patronage and at imperial expense. Being of the fourth century, the indirect testimony of the MS is most interesting and significant. It contains all the books that Eusebius catalogues as generally received in his day, including those still disputed by a minority, the Antilegomena. It also contains two of the extra-canonical books that Eusebius names as being often read in the churches and believed by some to be Scripture, though not fully canonical. On the whole, then, the Sinaitic Canon is what we should have a right to expect, if it were produced under the direction of Eusebius.

We may still have in existence a second of these Eusebian MSS—at least we have a second that belongs to this age—the famous Codex Vaticanus, which was placed in the great library of the Vatican by Pope Nicholas V, in 1448. Nothing is positively known of the former history of

the MS, but several circumstances make it extremely probable that it was brought from the East to Italy by the learned Greek, Bessarion, who bore so large a part in the Italian Renaissance, and became a cardinal of the Roman Church. It is a quarto, arranged in quires of five double sheets, which does not correspond to either form described by Eusebius, if he means to describe this form. On the other hand, it has three columns usually of forty-two lines each, which corresponds to one sort of MS described by Eusebius, if his puzzling words describe the manner of writing. It is beautifully written on elegant vellum, and no ancient MS exceeds it in beauty. It was long most jealously guarded from the eyes of scholars, even Tischendorf being permitted in 1843 to examine it no more than three hours each of two days. In 1866 he was permitted somewhat more license, but not enough to prepare a critical edition. An official edition, published under the nominal authority of Cardinal Mai, in 1857, proved inaccurate and unscholarly in every particular. This was at length followed in 1889 by a photographic facsimile, which has made this priceless treasure the common property of all biblical scholars.

The Vatican MS undoubtedly contained originally the entire Bible in Greek, of which nearly all the Old Testament is still preserved (it begins with Gen. 46 : 28, and lacks Ps. 105-137 and both Maccabees), but the New Testament breaks off abruptly at Heb. 9 : 14. The rest of the New Testament has been supplied from another MS owned by Cardinal Bessarion. These facts make the testimony of this very ancient MS less decisive for our purpose than could be desired. It is, of course, interesting to know that the entire seven Catholic Epistles are included, following the Acts. As Hebrews follows Second Thessalonians in this MS, as in the Sinaitic, we may safely conclude that all of the other Pauline Epistles were contained in it. What we cannot know, and what we would very much like to know is, whether the Apocalypse was originally a part of it, and also if it had in addition any of the "ecclesiastical books" not reckoned as belonging to the Canon; and, if so, which? We must be content, however, with knowing that, so far as its testimony goes, it is exactly that of the Codex Sinaiticus, and that in all probability the two agreed concerning the entire Canon.

B. D. 333 (?)

The Codex Alexandrinus, the greatest single

literary treasure of the British Museum, where any visitor may see it in the manuscript room, has belonged to that institution since 1753. It was a gift from the Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I, in 1628, and seems to have been in the possession of the Patriarchate since 814, when it was brought from Alexandria. Of its origin nothing is known, and there are few grounds for conjecture. The character of the writing is somewhat later than that of the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS, and fixes its probable date at about the beginning of the fifth century. It is a quarto, each page containing two columns of about fifty lines each, and large capital letters are found at the beginning of books and sections—a feature that of itself proves the date to be later than either of the other great uncials, neither of which contain such capital letters. With the exception of some lost leaves, this Codex contains the entire New Testament in the same order as that of the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS, and is followed by the two Epistles of Clement, the second incomplete.

A. D. 400 (?)

This fact, like the similar case of the Codex Sinaiticus, affords an opportunity for a difference of interpretation, according to the temperament

of the interpreter. By some it will be inferred that the placing of these documents in a MS evidently intended for liturgical use, indicates an intention to recognize the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd, and the two letters of Clement as having the authority of Scripture. To others it will seem equally clear that the careful placing of these documents in each case after the books that Eusebius tells us were canonical in his day, and that were later recognized by Athanasius and Cyril, shows that though they might be read in the churches as edifying books, they were not esteemed Scripture in the full sense.

One of the most interesting of the ancient MSS is the Codex Ephraemi, which is known as a palimpsest, because the original Greek text was partially scoured off with pumice to make place for some writings of St. Ephraem, one of the most famous Fathers of the Syrian Church (299-378). The Greek text is, however, faintly legible, and is believed to belong to the last half of the fifth century. It came to Italy early in the sixteenth century, whence it was brought to France by Catherine de' Medici, and so was deposited in the Royal Library at Paris, where it still remains. Originally a copy of the whole Bible, it now contains

parts of the Septuagint on sixty-four leaves and fragments of the New Testament on one hundred and forty-five leaves. Though thus fragmentary, it is a MS of great value to the critical student of the text, for it was carefully transcribed, and its authority perhaps ranks next to that of the Vatican MS. But it is equally significant for our purpose, for every book of our New Testament is represented by at least one leaf, save Third John and Second Thessalonians. The order of the books is identical with that of the other codices.

The only other great uncial is the Codex Bezae, which was presented to the University of Cambridge, in 1581, by Theodore Beza. All that is known of its previous history is that it came from the monastery of St. Irenæus, at Lyons, which was sacked during the civil war, and probably some soldier who had obtained it as plunder gave it to Beza. This codex is a quarto, with two columns of twenty-three lines on a page, one the Greek text, the other a Latin translation. After the four Gospels—which are given in the unique order of Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark—is a hiatus of sixty-seven leaves, which originally contained the Catholic

ℵ. D. 520 (?)

Epistles, and probably some other book; and then the Acts. Whether it ever contained anything else is uncertain. This MS has long been the puzzle of textual critics because of its numerous and bold variations from all other authorities, and its relation to the question of the Canon is little less puzzling. Its date cannot be earlier than the fifth century, and it more probably belongs to the sixth.

The testimony of these MSS to the virtual settlement of the Canon by the beginning of the fifth century is the more convincing because it is so wholly undesigned. These splendid and costly copies were evidently not made for private use—nobody but an emperor or some other great functionary of high rank and vast wealth could have afforded such a possession. No scholar doubts that they were made for use in the great Christian churches of the empire, and being made for that purpose they accurately reflect the estimate of the churches regarding the various books that had been competing for canonical recognition. Reuss well says of the MSS, "they are sometimes more important and more eloquent than the Fathers themselves," but thus far the MSS and the Fathers agree wondrous well.

Before leaving the subject of manuscript testimony altogether, there is another item to be considered—the evidence offered by the Codex Claromontanus. This is a MS of Paul's Epistles, in Greek and Latin, now found in the Royal Library at Paris, and believed to date from the middle of the sixth century. Each page has a single column of twenty-one lines, and the text is esteemed one of the most ancient and important in existence. It contains all the Pauline Epistles (with a hiatus here and there in the text), Hebrews being placed after Philemon, as in most Western MSS, thus indicating the lingering objections to this Epistle on account of its non-Pauline authorship.

D. 550 (?)

But the most significant thing in this MS is not its text, but a list of the books of the New Testament prefixed to the Epistle to the Hebrews, with their *stichoi,* or number of lines. The list is a curious one in several respects. It begins with the four Gospels in this order: Matthew, John, Mark, Luke; then follow the Epistles of Paul: Romans, two to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, two to Timothy, Titus, Colossians, Philemon; two to Peter (which can be due only to the carelessness of the copyist),

James; three of John, Jude; Epistle of Barnabas (probably meaning Hebrews); Revelation of John; Acts of the Apostles. These are all the books of the accepted Canon, but there follow, with no indication of a difference in character, the Shepherd, Acts of Paul, and Revelation of Peter. These last are books that Eusebius places among the Notha. This is one of the latest testimonies available to show the continued liturgical use of some of the same books in the West, after the voice of authority had definitely pronounced against them. Nothing could more strongly emphasize the principle that it was the usage of the churches, and not authority, that decided the whole question of canonicity. In other words, canonicity was a matter of common law in the church, not of statute law.

The making of versions of the New Testament books into several of the languages spoken in various parts of the empire doubtless began long before we have any positive records of them. The native tongue of most of the apostles was Aramaic (the "Hebrew" of Acts 21 : 40, and the "Hebrew" in which tradition says Matthew first wrote his "Logia," or sayings of the Lord). This was the language of the greater part of

Syria, of which Antioch was the metropolis. Though Antioch was in large part a Greek-speaking city, Aramaic must have been of equal currency among the native population; and when Antioch became the Christian missionary center, it could not have been long before Aramaic Christians began to multiply. As these Aramaic churches grew, the desire for the Gospels and the Epistles in their own tongue would grow also, and by the year 150 a partial version at least was in all probability in circulation. This would naturally begin with the translation of separate books, which would after a time be collected, revised, and completed. A Syrian version is said to have been quoted as early as 170 by Bishop Melito, and though the actual quotation is from the book of Genesis, it can hardly be doubted that a version of at least some New Testament books in Syriac must have preceded any Old Testament translations.

We need not enter into the controversy, that has long been hotly waging among the learned, regarding the superior antiquity of the two Syriac versions, the Peshito and the Curetonian. Those who have devoted most attention to the matter are the frankest to confess their uncertainty. The

Peshito at any rate seems to belong to the second century, and not improbably to the first half of it. The oldest MSS of it contain the Provisional Canon, with the addition of the Epistles of James and Hebrews, but excluding the remaining four Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. With this Canon the later MSS seem to agree. To this day the Syriac New Testament excludes the Apocalypse and four of the Catholic Epistles. The Syrian Church became much divided and so remains. But all have the same Canon. "Yet the same translation of the Holy Scripture is read alike in the public assemblies of the Nestorians among the fastnesses of Kurdestan, of the Monophysites who are scattered over the plains of Syria, of the Christians of St. Thomas along the coast of Malabar, and of the Maronites on the mountain terraces of Lebanon."[1] Indeed, the Syriac churches are the only Christian bodies in the world who have never accepted the orthodox Canon.

A. D. 150 (?)

This is what we should be prepared to find, since we have seen the East to be in advance of the West in the reception of James and Hebrews, and behind in the acceptance of the Apocalypse.

[1] Scrivener, II., 7.

But it is important to observe that even the East was not entirely homogeneous—the Syrian school and the Alexandrine differed materially in their estimate of certain New Testament books. The conservatism of the Syrian churches in the matter of the Canon is shown in this: though there were doubtless as many apocryphal books in circulation there as elsewhere, there is no hint, whether in their scriptural MSS or in the writings of the Syrian Fathers, that these apocrypha were ever confounded with the writings clearly canonical.

There would naturally be a version made in Latin at a very early date in the history of Christianity. Even if we should admit all that is recklessly asserted about the predominantly Greek character of the Roman Church down to the third century, and thereby also admit that the making of an early Latin version at Rome was most unlikely to happen, these considerations would not apply to the African Church, or to Carthage, its center. That a Latin version must be assumed to have been produced and circulated there not long after 150, seems to be a fair inference, if not a necessary, from the writings of Tertullian. These

A. D. 150 (?)

begin about 190, and it is the general conclusion of patristic scholars that he usually quotes from a Latin version, already long enough circulated to be in general use and familiar to Christian readers.

But Tertullian was a fair Greek scholar, and he seems at times to translate for himself directly from the Greek. This makes the task of deciding what books of the New Testament were contained in this old Latin version a somewhat difficult one. Some argue strenuously that it could not have contained Hebrews, Second Peter, or James, but they rely more on general Western reluctance to accept these books than on the actual evidence of Tertullian's citations. It is true that he cites James only five times, but then he refers to First Thessalonians and Titus only eight times each, and we may be certain that the old Latin Canon contained all the Pauline Epistles. As to Hebrews, he cites that Epistle forty-two times, at least one quotation from nearly every chapter, and large portions of chapters 10-13 might be reconstructed from his quotations. Nor do the passages cited from this book give any peculiar evidence of direct translation from the Greek, rather than quotation from a received Latin ver-

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sion. On the whole, it is probable that Tertullian's Old Latin New Testament contained both Hebrews and James, but the evidence for Second Peter, Jude, and Second and Third John is less satisfactory. Tertullian indeed refers to all these in a way to make probable his acceptance of them as canonical, but not so as to prove their presence in the old Latin version.

The evidence of this version is, therefore, nearly what we should expect, from other sources, to be found at this time in a Western (and especially an African) collection of the New Testament writings, whether in Greek or Latin. But this could not have been the only ancient version in Latin. Jerome tells us in his preface to the Gospels, that in his day there were "almost as many versions as manuscripts," and Augustine is even more emphatic: "For the translations of the Scripture from Hebrew into Greek can be counted, but the Latin translations are out of all number. For in the early days of the faith every man who happened to get his hands upon a Greek manuscript, and who thought he had any knowledge, were it ever so little, of the two languages, ventured upon the work of translation." [1] After-

[1] *De Doc. Chr.*, ii. 11.

ward, Augustine indicates clearly his own preference among these numerous translations: "Now, among translations themselves, the Itala is to be preferred to the others, for it keeps closer to the words, while preserving clearness and expression." [1]

But neither Jerome nor Augustine was a critical scholar, according to modern standards, and they seem to have mistaken manuscript variations for evidence of independent translation. Many manuscripts exist that are older than Jerome's recension, which became known as the Vulgate, and a study of these has convinced textual critics that they are all variations of, at most, two originals: one the African version already mentioned, the other one that was made somewhat later in Rome, or at any rate in Italy, probably the one that Augustine calls *Itala*. Unfortunately, however, they survive mostly in fragments, and these mainly confined to the Gospels, though one contains the Acts and Apocalypse, and others give us fragments of Epistles, including First and Second Peter, First John, James, and all the Pauline Epistles, including Hebrews. The only books entirely missing are Jude and Second and

[1] *De Doc. Chr.*, ii. 15.

Third John. Even these must have been added before Jerome began his recension, but in the fourth century they were probably lacking. This again agrees well with what we have discovered from other sources.

The Coptic version could have been little later than those that we have already considered, and was probably in existence at the beginning of the third century. This we can fairly infer, not only from the extension of Christianity in Upper Egypt in the second century, but from what we learn from Athanasius about St. Anthony. In this famous "Life of Anthony"[1] we are told that the saint could only talk with Greeks through an interpreter (c. 74), but in his youth he heard the Gospels read in church and was deeply impressed by their teachings (chap. 2, 3). It follows that he must have heard the Gospels in his vernacular; and, as he was born about 250, this Coptic version must have even then been in use for some time in the churches of Upper Egypt.

A. D. 200 (?)

We do not know which of the several dialects

[1] The authenticity of this writing has been hotly disputed, but we need not boggle over the acceptance of a book that critics like Keim and Hilgenfeld believe at any rate to belong to the age of Athanasius, and that Harnack and Moeller receive as trustworthy.

of the Coptic languages Anthony spoke, nor can we be certain what relations the existing Coptic versions bear to those in use in his day. There are remains of at least five different versions, with marked dialectic peculiarities; but of three there are only insignificant fragments, while two we have in a form virtually complete: the Bohairic and Sahidic. For our purposes it is unnecessary to discuss the yet unsolved problems of their origin and relationship; what concerns us is their content. As far back as we can trace the history of the Bohairic New Testament, it contains all the books of our Canon, with the exception of the Apocalypse. In many cases this is contained in a separate MS, and where it is bound up with the other books it is distinguished from them in some unmistakable way. Always it is treated as having an authority inferior to that of the other books. If the version was originally made at the close of the second century, this would reflect the opinion then entertained at Alexandria of the Apocalypse, but after Clement and Origen gave their approval to the book the case was otherwise.

The Sahidic version exists in a number of MSS, no one of which gives the whole, and in addition to this virtually complete manuscript

text certain papyrus fragments have recently been discovered that carry the date of this version back to the third century, at least, and not improbably to the second. Both versions seem to have arranged the New Testament writings in the following order: the four Gospels, the Pauline Epistles (with Hebrews between Second Corinthians and Galatians), the Catholic Epistles and the Acts. The Sahidic, equally with the Bohairic, found no place in the Canon for the Apocalypse, and does not seem to have permitted that book to be added even as a sort of appendix, for few fragments of the Apocalypse have survived.

The foregoing versions were all made before the end of the third century, at the latest date that can be possibly assigned to any of them, and they reflect the unsettled state of the Canon at the time they were made. But we have a number of versions belonging to the fifth century when, as we have seen, the Fathers and councils combine in testimony that the question was virtually settled. Do these versions confirm this testimony or do they contradict it?

The first, and most important of these, is the revision of the old Latin versions made by Jerome, and thenceforth known as the Vulgate, or

Common version. There were so many variant copies in circulation in his day—and the differences between them were, as we have seen, so extensive as to constitute them in Jerome's opinion different versions—that to compare them with one another and with the original Greek and Hebrew, and A. D. 385 make an authoritative text, seemed not only to Jerome, but to other learned men of the time, a work second in importance to none. He completed his revision of the New Testament about 385, and the Old Testament in 405. It will not surprise those who remember how the Anglo-American Revised version of 1881 was at first received, and how slow has been its progress among English-speaking peoples, to hear that Jerome was reviled throughout the West for his labors, and that it was not until after Gregory the Great had given it his formal approval (about 600) that his recension came into general use in the Roman Church.

With the vicissitudes of the Vulgate, however, we have no immediate concern, interesting though it might be to follow its fortunes. What especially concerns us is its attitude toward the Canon. We know from Jerome's writings that

he gave much attention to this subject. In his biographical sketches of "Illustrious Men" in the history of the church—the first attempt toward a dictionary of Christian biography—he has discussed all the doubtful and disputed books, and their real or putative authors. We also learn clearly from Jerome's writings that he was anxious above all things to be orthodox, that he was so sensitive to no other charge as to the least imputation of heresy. This lends double authority to his decision about the canonical books, for he took every possible pains to reflect and establish the orthodox view of his day. The New Testament part of the Vulgate, which is all that concerns us now, contained the books of our present Canon and no other. Although Jerome, as we have seen, recognized certain other books as edifying, he did not include any of them in his revised version, which ended with the Revelation of John.

There was probably no single influence so potent in bringing the entire West into uniformity with regard to the Canon, as the decision of Jerome and the publication of his version. As this gradually came to be truly the Vulgate, the one version everywhere received and used, the only

form in which the New Testament was accessible in all the countries of Europe during the Middle Ages, all previous doubts disappeared, all question regarding canonicity ceased, not to be revived again until the Reformation. More than any bishop, or pope, or council, Jerome is to be regarded as the final arbiter of all questions of canonicity in the West. From his day, the question is to be regarded as settled. And it was settled not by any voice of authority, spoken for that purpose, but by the extending use of the Vulgate in the public services of the Western Church, and by consequence its equal acceptance for private study and for quotation in all theological writings. Usage, not authority; custom, not law, from the beginning of the process to the end, guided the formation of the Canon.

A version of the Scriptures was made in Armenian in the fifth century, or possibly in the latter part of the fourth. The surviving copies have doubtless undergone considerable variations of text, in common with all other ancient writings, but there is no reason to suppose that any additions have been made to the contents. We have every reason to believe that the original version contained what

A. D. 400 (?)

is found in all existing copies, namely, all the canonical New Testament books. The only book that we should expect to be lacking, in any case, is the Apocalypse, and scholars are of the opinion that in the extant MSS we have two independent translations of this book. What bearing, if any, this fact has on the canonicity of the Apocalypse is a problem that up to the present has not been worked out.

An Ethiopic version that has survived in a number of fragmentary MSS, which together contain a complete version of the New Testament, is assigned by scholars to the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, by which time Christianity had become the prevailing religion of Abyssinia. The Gospels ordinarily form a volume by themselves in the existing MSS of this version, while the Epistles of Paul made a second, and the Catholic Epistles, Acts, and the Apocalypse, a third. This grouping bears witness to a hypothesis that we have found occasionally suggested throughout our inquiry: that our Canon is the result of putting together several smaller collections that had been independently made, and at different times. It cannot be said, however, that all the evidence that we have discovered,

taken together, warrants the assertion of this theory as a probable fact.

Of the Gothic version of Ulfilas it is impossible to speak definitely, since so little is positively known of it. The chief MS, the Codex Argenteus, which after many mutations of fortune found a resting-place in the library of the University of Upsala, Sweden, contains only the four Gospels, and even these incomplete. The other most extensive MS, in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, supplies parts of Paul's Epistles and some Old Testament fragments. A few scattered verses have been gleaned from other sources, but thus far no portion of the Acts, Hebrews, Catholic Epistles, or Apocalypse. We cannot doubt that the greater part of these, if not all, were found in the complete version. Indeed, Philostorgius, one of the Greek historians, informs us that Ulfilas translated all the books of both the Old and New Testaments, with the exception of the books of Kings, which he thought too full of wars to be wholesome reading for so warlike a people as the Goths. But just how much value is to be attached to this, or any other unsupported statement by Philostorgius, is a matter of great dubiety.

A. D. 375 (?)

The manuscripts and versions as a whole agree entirely in their testimony with the other documents. And together, these original sources make the history of the formation of the Canon as clear as noonday.

X

THE TESTS OF CANONICITY

X

CANONICITY was the result of usage primarily and chiefly—of this our investigation has given us full and convincing proofs. But for us to see that this is the historic fact, and for those who made the history to be conscious of what they were doing, are two very different things. How far was the process that we have been tracing a matter of conscious knowledge to the Fathers themselves? How did the matter of canonicity present itself to their minds? What did they regard as adequate tests of the canonicity of any given book? It is conceded that the answers to these questions cannot alter the historic facts, but they may strikingly illuminate the facts.

I. In the numerous quotations made in the previous chapters from the patristic literature, one feature has surely been of sufficient prominence to arrest the attention of every reader, even if his attention had not been more than once called to it: the emphasis laid by so many of the Fathers on the fact that certain books were (or were not) "read in the churches." That phrase

has been one of too frequent recurrence for its significance to be missed. From the first mention by Justin of the reading of the "Memoirs" of the apostles in the public Christian assemblies of his day, to the dying-away of all controversy about the Canon in the fifth century, we find that phrase "read in the churches," or some equivalent, continually used.

Not only so, but, beginning with Irenæus, we find the reading in the churches of a given book, or the reverse, constantly adduced as a valid reason for regarding a book as canonical. That Father, it will be remembered, exhorts those who wish to know the truth to "read the Scriptures diligently in company with the presbyters in the church, with whom is the apostolic doctrine." The books read as Scripture in the Catholic churches, and only those, are safe guides for him who would live as a Christian—that is the conviction of Irenæus, and we may take it that this had become a general conviction toward the close of the second century. The Muratorian canon, though it recognizes other tests of canonicity, which we shall presently consider, also lays great stress on this reading in the churches as at any rate the decisive practical proof that a book is

canonical. This conclusion is confirmed by the language of Tertullian, who urges in favor of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he attributes to Barnabas, that it is "more received in the churches than that apocryphal Shepherd of adulterers"; and the latter book, he also tells us, has been everywhere rejected by the churches. To him this is evidently a decisive reason for accepting or rejecting a book, though he makes it clear elsewhere that he did not consider it the sole reason.

The testimony of Eusebius shows conclusively what was the feeling of his time in the matter. He especially mentions that the Shepherd "has been publicly read in the churches," but makes it clear in the context that this means merely some churches. It is precisely because it was not universally read in churches that he declined to place it among the acknowledged books (*Homologoumena*), or even among the *Antilegomena,* that were semi-canonical in his day, but distinctly among the *Notha,* or "spurious" books. The apparent inconsistencies between the two chief passages in which Eusebius discusses the matter of the Canon disappear as soon as we get his point of view. Among the books not fully canon-

ical in his day, *i. e.,* universally received and read in all the churches, were some that were received and read by the majority, though still rejected by "some"; these he called the *Antilegomena.* There were others that, though accepted and read by "some," were not accepted and read by the majority; these were called *Notha,* spurious.[1] His classification and nomenclature were absolutely determined by the fact of liturgical use, though his personal opinion regarding individual books was greatly affected by what he calls the usage of the ancient or ecclesiastical writers, which we shall consider in another connection.

The Festal Letter of Athanasius,[2] which he wrote in 367, has been frequently cited during our investigation. When we consider that this is a letter addressed to the clergy, it is evident that the whole question was to his mind one of public reading of books as Scripture in the churches—Athanasius makes no objection to private reading of other books; indeed, he expressly adds that it is permitted—and that to his mind the one conclu-

[1] He even recognizes two classes, or grades, among the *Notha:* books read in some churches or quoted by the ancients, or both, yet nevertheless not canonical, but what Rufinus calls "ecclesiastical"; and books neither read in churches nor cited by Fathers, though some bore the names of apostles.

[2] Appendix V.

sive test of canonicity was usage of the churches. Such books as were everywhere read in the churches, and such books alone, could be regarded as "handed down and accredited as divine."

But of all the Fathers, Augustine gives us the fullest and clearest testimony on the subject. In his treatise on "Christian Doctrine" he tells his readers how the question of canonicity was to be decided:

> Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures, he [the interpreter] must follow the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles. Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures, he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Among those again, which are not received by all, he will prefer such as have the sanction of the greater number and those of greater authority, to such as are held by the smaller number and those of less authority. If, however, he shall find that some books are held by the greater number of churches, and others by the churches of greater authority (though this is not a very likely thing to happen), I think that in such a case the authority on the two sides is to be looked upon as equal.[1]

How Augustine would apply this principle he makes plain in his catalogue of the Old Testa-

[1] *Christ. Doc.*, ii. 8.

ment. He mentions that two books, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, though sometimes attributed to Solomon, were probably written by Jesus the son of Sirach, and adds: "Still they are to be reckoned among the prophetic books, since they have attained recognition as being authoritative." [1] The first three books of this treatise were written in 397, but the fourth book was not written till 426, in which year the whole was published. It is significant that, though Augustine was present at the Synod of Carthage in 397, and took part in its proceedings, he makes no reference to its decree regarding the Canon as being authoritative. Indeed, why should he? or how could he? The Carthage Synod did nothing but declare, as matter of fact, what were the canonical Scriptures, as actually received by the catholic churches. The Synod and Augustine agreed perfectly, alike in the principle involved, which both accepted, and as to the facts, to which both testify.

II. A second test of canonicity was recognition by the Fathers. Eusebius, in one passage, makes this even more prominent than the public

[1] In his "Retractations" Augustine tells us that he made a mistake about this, and has since learned that Wisdom was probably not written by Jesus son of Sirach, though Ecclesiasticus was. (Book II. 4.)

reading in the churches. The first Epistle of Peter he accepts because "the ancient presbyters used it freely in their own writings, as an undisputed work." On the other hand, he declines to receive the Acts of Peter and the Gospel, Preaching, and Apocalypse that also bear his name, "because no ecclesiastical writer, ancient or modern, has made use of the testimonies drawn from them." And accordingly, he quotes what is said regarding various books by Papias, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius of Corinth, and other Fathers, most of which quotations have already appeared in their appropriate places in this investigation, and need not be repeated. Some of these quotations bear only in an indirect manner on the question of canonicity, being rather concerned with the kindred yet distinct questions of authorship and historicity. If Eusebius had been a more accurate thinker he would have made this distinction, but he evidently saw little if any difference between these three related questions, and evidence that properly belongs to one he often advances to prove another.

But though no other writer quotes his predecessors so profusely as Eusebius, the practice is by no means confined to him. Irenæus appeals

frequently to the testimony of a "certain presbyter," whom he does not name; and by name he cites Papias, Polycarp, and Justin as testifying to the Christian writings and their content. Origen refers to the "men of old" who had handed down the Epistle to the Hebrews as Paul's writing. It is probable that the authority of the Fathers is included in the phrase of Athanasius about the books that "had been handed down and accredited as divine." Jerome quotes every bit of tradition regarding the New Testament books that his diligence has enabled him to scrape together.

These instances are not very numerous, perhaps less numerous than we might have expected in view of the importance that Eusebius seems to attach to this test, but we may well remember this: the judgment of most men who were worthy of being cited as authority passed into and became lost in the judgment of their churches. They expressed their conviction regarding any writing, by using their influence to have it admitted into or excluded from the collection of books preserved in their church and publicly read and expounded as a part of divine worship. When we note the usage of the churches, there-

fore, we are always connoting the judgment of the Fathers. Having given their testimony in the most practical and effective form, and having ever before them in general ecclesiastical usage the testimony of others, they were little concerned about literary evidence of their own judgment, and still less to preserve in literary form the judgment of others.

III. Apostolic authorship was an important test of canonicity, so important that not a few writers of authority have insisted that it was the chief test, or even the sole test.[1] But this can hardly be made good, in face of the fact that three Gospels are anonymous, and two of them are not even attributed to an apostle; to say nothing of the Acts and the Epistle to the Hebrews, both of which are anonymous, and one of them never attributed to an apostle, while the other was attributed to an apostle who almost certainly did not write it. How any one, with such facts confronting him, can say that apostolic authorship was necessary to canonicity passes comprehension.

[1] For example, Harnack, who maintains that Tertullian and Irenæus regard all apostolic writings as canonical, and conversely accept nothing as canonical that they do not believe to be apostolic. (*Dogma*, ii. 55, note.)

"Apostolicity," say others, was necessary. That is to say, though a book might not be written by an apostle, it must come from the apostolic circle, and embody apostolic ideas and traditions. There is much to be said for this, provided it is not made the chief test—the facts will not admit of that. That apostolicity, in this modified sense, came to be regarded as one of the tests of a book's claim to a place in the Canon is probably true, though little direct evidence can be quoted in favor of this theory. There is plenty of indirect evidence, however, that is hardly explicable on any other hypothesis. For example, the traditions that early came to be circulated about the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Justin [1] is careful to say that the Memoirs, or Gospels, were written "by apostles and their companions," which indicates that already the need of some apostolic sanction was felt for books that had been admitted to the Canon for their own intrinsic worth. Tertullian is careful to assure his readers that while Matthew and John were written by apostles, Mark and Luke had as authors "apostolic men," *i. e.*, companions of apostles. And still earlier, though we have it only through Eusebius, Papias had re-

[1] *Dial.*, 103.

corded that Mark was a follower and interpreter of Peter and wrote down what he remembered of Peter's teachings. And Luke, Eusebius tells us, in the writing of his Gospel, was "aided by his intimacy and his stay with Paul and by his acquaintance with the rest of the apostles," in which he is probably following Irenæus.[1] Why this care to establish the close connection of Mark with Peter, and of Luke with Paul, save to give to their Gospels an apostolic authority that they could not otherwise be thought to possess?

It was the need of this same shield of apostolic authority, no doubt, that led Tertullian to ascribe the Epistle to the Hebrews to Barnabas, and Clement to say that it is Luke's translation of a Hebrew original by Paul. A clear and positive tradition in the West that this book was not Paul's kept this Epistle long in a state of dubious canonicity, since the West was strongly inclined to insist on actual or virtual apostolic authorship, while the East was content with "apostolicity," that is, that a book came from the apostolic circle and embodied apostolic doctrine, both of which might be confidently affirmed of Hebrews.

[1] *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 14. 1.

IV. The content of a book was also taken into consideration in deciding its canonicity. That is to say, its doctrine must be generally recognized to be correct. We are so accustomed ourselves to make the Scripture the sole test of doctrine as to be inclined to forget that such was not the practice of the Church during the centuries while the Canon was forming. Side by side with the Scriptures was another standard of doctrine, the deposit of the faith orally received by the churches from the apostles and orally transmitted from generation to generation. This was the *regula fidei,* or "rule of faith," of which Tertullian makes so much. Twice in his writings he formally states what this "rule of faith" was. In one case he gives a terse form of the Apostles' Creed; in the other, he paraphrases and elaborates some of the clauses, but adds no new article. In both he makes it clear that the Catholic churches had a standard of Christian doctrine which they believed had come by trustworthy transmission direct from the apostles. This rule of faith and the Scriptures mutually appealed to and confirmed each other. Whatever did not agree with either was rejected, and any writing that did not conform to the rule of faith could not be accepted as

Scripture. It was because he believed it to contain false and dangerous doctrine that Tertullian protested so strongly against the Shepherd.

Even before Tertullian this idea of the necessity of orthodoxy had found firm lodgment in the West, at least. The Muratorian Fragment objects to the reception into the Catholic Church of certain epistles, falsely called Pauline, "for it is not suitable for gall to be mixed with honey." The books of the Gnostic heretics are also said to be rejected. On the other hand, the Shepherd, though apparently of unexceptional orthodoxy, and to be read for edification, "cannot be publicly read in the churches to the people," evidently because it has no shadow of claim to apostolicity, having been written "very recently in our own times in the city of Rome," by one Hermas, "while his brother, Pius, occupied the chair of the Church of Rome." Even a book that was at least believed to be from the pen of a Roman bishop's brother could not be admitted to be canonical in the West, if this is really a Western document.

V. Finally, the capacity of a book to edify was an accepted test of canonicity. Tertullian [1] avows

[1] *De Vel. Virg.*, c. 3.

this in his discussion of the canonicity of Enoch, and of course his principle would apply equally to all Christian writings: "But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord, nothing at all must be rejected by us which pertains to us; and we read that 'every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired.'"[1] This rendering of 2 Tim. 3 : 16 is not unimpeachable, but that is not the point—the point is that Tertullian regards edification as implying inspiration, and hence canonicity. Eusebius evidently held a similar opinion and, what is far more significant, bears witness that such an opinion was general. Speaking of the Second Epistle of Peter, he says, "we have learned that this extant second epistle ought not to be received [into full canonicity], but as it appeared profitable to many, it has been used with the other Scriptures." That is to say, because it was profitable some churches used it for public reading, so that it was a candidate for canonicity, but not yet fully approved. Of the Shepherd he says, that while it is rejected by some, "by others it is

[1] Tertullian frankly admits that "the Scripture of Enoch," as he calls it, is not in the Jewish Canon, and hence that some Christians do not receive it; but he argues that the Jews evidently rejected it because it testified too clearly of Christ.

considered quite indispensable, especially to those who need instruction in the elements of the faith," and hence has been publicly read in the churches. But eventually the Shepherd was rejected from the Canon.

We find similar facts mentioned down to the fifth century, even after the question of the Canon must be regarded as definitely settled. A number of books—the Epistles of Clement and Barnabas and the Shepherd at least—for some generations maintained a place as a sort of appendix to the Canon, because of their recognized value for edification. We may find it a little difficult to comprehend why these books were so highly esteemed, but that is not at all material. The unmistakable fact is that they were so esteemed down to the sixth or seventh century. That esteem was sufficient to keep them in use as edifying writings, but not enough to ensure them a place in the Canon.

Must not the conclusion be drawn from this fact that edification was considered a less important formal qualification than apostolicity? No book could be admitted to the Canon that wholly lacked this edifying quality—though it must be confessed that the Fathers attribute very

little edification to some of the canonical books—but capacity to edify seems not to have been sufficient to secure canonical recognition for a book, else the Shepherd would almost certainly have secured it. For, with the single exception of Tertullian, all the Fathers speak well of it; some quote it with utmost respect; at least one explicitly declares it to be inspired; and all these commendations fairly reflected the common judgment of Christian readers.

And yet, though the Fathers did not adequately appreciate the fact, and hence have imperfectly testified to it, can we avoid the conclusion that this was the really decisive test, both for and against the admission of books to the Canon? The universal, even though so largely silent, conviction of the Church as to the supreme worth of certain books for the guidance and building up of Christian character must have been the *principle* on which the *fact* of Catholic usage rested. We can reach this conclusion not only by the examination of the direct evidence, not inconsiderable in itself, but by a process of exclusion. *There is no other adequate motive assignable.* That of which Harnack and others make so much, the desire to build up a compact orthodox literature, to

serve as a defense against heresy, we have seen fails to explain more than a small part of the facts. As a co-ordinating principle to account for the whole process of Canon-making it is miserably inadequate. But the hypothesis that Catholic usage, which is the actual historic basis of the Canon, was itself based on the silent conviction of the Church, gradually reached through the Christian experience of generations, that these books had an intrinsic divine character, and were preeminently fitted to edify the saints, will account for all the facts. No other hypothesis ever proposed so satisfactorily accounts for all that is known, while contradicting none of our knowledge, as does this.

This test that the Fathers of the first five centuries treat as if it were of secondary value, seems to Protestant evangelical Christians of the present day the only decisive test; while the test upon which the first centuries laid so preponderating stress, the custom of the Catholic churches, seems to us of very little worth. With the beginning of the Reformation, there began careful inquiry into the validity of the things that had been established by the custom of the Church, and most of them were presently disallowed as

unknown to the churches established by the apostles and, therefore, at best, to be regarded as excrescences on primitive Christianity. The Canon could not and did not escape examination, though it cannot be said that it was at that time given any rigid and scientific scrutiny. It was perceived, however, that some better basis must be found for the authority of Scripture than the mere custom of the Church, or it could not be made the final court of appeal in the controversies then raging. In other words, some answer had to be found to the question, On what does canonicity depend? Do we receive the books called the New Testament because the Church has authoritatively declared them to be Scripture? Or do we receive these books as Scripture, the inspired and authoritative word of God, because of their own intrinsic value? And if the latter, what is the final guarantee of their value?

Erasmus, who fully shared the critical doubts of his age regarding the authorship of some of the books, was yet ready to submit to the voice of authority, spoken through the Church. "According to human reason," he says, "I neither believe that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of Paul or of Luke, nor that the second

Epistle of Peter was written by Peter, nor that the Apocalypse is from John the apostle. . . Nevertheless, if the Church receives the titles, I condemn my doubts, for the expressed judgment of the Church counts for more with me than human reasons of any sort."[1] He would, in other words, accept the decision of the Church, not merely as to the ecclesiastical fact of canonicity, but as to the historical fact of authorship. If the Church said a thing was so, Erasmus would hold that it was so, even if he knew it wasn't so! And, of course, every loyal Roman Catholic must always be ready to stultify himself in just that way.

But the Reformers were not ready to commit that sort of intellectual *hara-kiri*. To Luther, Christianity was a personal experience of salvation by grace, and its central truth was the sinner's justification by faith alone in Christ and his work of expiation, to the absolute exclusion of all merit gained by works. To him, therefore, canonicity was determined by the attitude of a book toward these particular ideas, which he held to be fundamental. "There is the true touchstone to test all books, when one sees whether

[1] Op., ix. 864.

they are concerned with Christ or not, since all Scripture ought to show us Christ (Rom. 3), and St. Paul will nothing but Christ (1 Cor. 2). What Christ does not teach is not apostolic, even though Peter or Paul should teach it; on the other hand, what Christ teaches would be apostolic though it were said by Judas, Annas, Pilate, or Herod."[1] The whole Bible ought to preach Christ and his salvation, otherwise it was no Bible. Any book that was utterly silent about Christ might be tolerated, but had no place in the Canon; while any book that was in any way inconsistent with these ideas ought not to be tolerated by Christians at all. From his point of view, therefore, the Gospel of John, the Pauline Epistles (especially Romans and Galatians), and the first Epistle of Peter, as they contain the very marrow of the Gospel, are the important books of the Canon and are to be preferred to all others.[2] This was why he felt bound to reject from the Canon the Epistles of James and Jude, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse, and place them at the end of the volume in his version of the New Testament, while in the table

[1] Preface to James, German Works 73 : 157.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, 73 : 114; Preface to the New Testament, 1522.

of contents their titles were separated by a significant interval from the first twenty-three books, which are further distinguished by being numbered, while the last four are not.

And Luther makes abundantly plain in his various prefaces his reason for this rejection of the authority of these books. It rests entirely on his estimate of their intrinsic worth. It is true that he mentions the fact of their insufficient historical attestation, but evidently that is not the real, impelling reason for his rejection of them, for Second Peter is even less attested; and he does not say a word about that, but puts it in his Canon. Defective historical attestation never troubled him. He objects to James because of its unsound doctrine (as he thought) of justification by works. He objects to Hebrews because in three places (chapters 6, 10, 12) it seems to him to deny the possibility of repentance for sins committed after baptism, contrary to the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul. Nevertheless, he calls the setting forth of Christ's priesthood in this Epistle "masterly." The Epistle of Jude contains nothing that is fundamental to the Christian faith and is "useless." The Apocalypse he held to be neither apostolic nor prophetic. It contains only

images and visions which nobody can understand, and Christ is neither taught nor acknowledged![1]

Some of these views are purely personal, subjective, and even whimsical. They did not convince the followers of Luther; for, though Lutherans have always retained in their German Bible the peculiar arrangement of the New Testament books adopted by its translator, they very early abandoned his views of the last four books, and developed an extreme theory of the verbal inspiration and absolute authority of the whole Canon. The value of Luther's work consists in the fact that he overthrew, so far as the Protestant world is concerned, the idea that the authority of the Canon rests on no better foundation than the custom of the Church. The books of the New Testament have an intrinsic value, or else they lack intrinsic value, and the question of their acception or rejection turns on the estimate of that value. The weak point in Luther's statement of principle was that it provided no criterion of value. He seems to have assumed that each believer has a right to decide the matter for himself —as, in a sense, the right of private judgment

[1] See the Prefaces to these books in the volume of Luther's German works already cited.

implies—and so he proceeded to make his own Canon, and then, with characteristic inconsistency, to impose that on others, so far as he was able.

The other Reformers perceived this defect in Luther's teaching, and deplored the practical results to which it led him. They therefore devoted themselves to strengthening this weak place in the Protestant position regarding the Canon. It was Calvin, the greatest theologian of the Reformation, who spoke the decisive word on this, as on so many other questions then in dispute. The earlier editions of his "Institutes" did not contain a discussion of the Holy Scriptures, but four chapters of Book I., of the final edition of 1559, are given to this subject. Many ask, he says, "who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God; who guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times; who persuade us that this book is to be received with reverence, and that one expunged from the list, did not the Church regulate these things with certainty?" Such questions he stigmatizes as profane and "insult to the Holy Spirit." "Nothing can be more absurd than the fiction that the power of judging Scripture is in the Church, and

that on her nod its certainty depends. When the Church receives it and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted, but, acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bound, shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent. As to the question, How shall we be persuaded that it came from God without recurring to a decree of the Church? it is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth as white and black do of their color, sweet and bitter of their taste."

So far, indeed, Calvin has hardly progressed beyond Luther. But he proceeds to ask how we may be certain of this divine origin of the Scriptures, and this is his answer: "If then we would consult most effectually for our consciences, and save them from being driven about in a whirl of uncertainty, from wavering, and even stumbling at the smallest obstacle, our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures, judgments, or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of the

Spirit." And again: "For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely intrusted." And he sums up the whole discussion in the following: "Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in the Scripture; that Scripture carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured—as much so as if we beheld the divine image impressed on it—that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God." [1]

[1] Calvin's "Institutes," Book I., chap. 7. Calvin Translation Society's ed.

It is a fair corollary from this principle, though Calvin does not formally draw it, that the Spirit will say the same thing to all believers, since he is the author of truth and not of falsehood, of order and not of confusion. Therefore a consensus of Christian experience and Christian conviction regarding the Scriptures is to be expected, and has in fact been reached. In that consensus we have complete and satisfactory attestation that the books composing our New Testament Canon, and those only, are worthy to be received as Holy Scripture. The testimony of the Spirit to the hearts of believers during so many generations cannot be wrong. Criticism may say what it will about the authorship and date of these books —and scholars are to be jealously protected in their right to investigate freely and to print boldly the results of their work—but, as to the intrinsic quality, the divine origin and religious authority of these books we have a rock-based conviction, because it is based on the fact that the same Spirit that dwelt in those who wrote the books has spoken in our hearts and vouches for their divine origin and power.

This has ever remained the Protestant doctrine, and wherever the doctrine has been officially de-

fined, it has been in these terms or their equivalent. The Belgic Confession (1561) declares:

Art. V. We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing, without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are of God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.[1]

To the same purport exactly is the French Confession of 1559:

Art. IV. We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books, upon which, however useful, we cannot found any articles of faith.[2]

The clearest and most unmistakable statement of the doctrine, however, is to be found in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession (1647), entitled "Of the Holy Scripture":

IV. The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon

[1] Schaff, "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. III., pp. 386, 387.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 361.

the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.

V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.[1]

But it may be asked, Does this doctrine of a consensus of Christian experience impose an obligation on every believer to accept the Canon of the New Testament, even if he feels personal doubt or objection in the case of some book or books? In other words, Is the individual Christian's right and duty of private judgment abrogated by the belief of the majority? The question is pertinent, and deserves a candid answer. And that answer can only be, No. Nothing can relieve each believer of the duty of private judg-

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 602, 603.

ment, no power can take from him the right, for to his own Master each of his servants must stand or fall. The voice of the Spirit in my own heart is the only voice that can convince me. Unless a book appeals to my soul as divine in its origin and authority, nothing can convince me that it is divine. That every believer has a right to say, nay, it is his duty to say it, and to die for it, if need be. But many well-meaning Christians have mistaken some other voice for a voice of the Spirit. We do well to cultivate a meek and quiet spirit, therefore, and to compare our experience and convictions with those of others, lest we be misled into error, instead of led into truth.

Every believer of necessity will have his own private Canon of Scripture. By that is not meant that he will dogmatically exclude any book of the present Canon or add any book that is not there. But not every book of the Canon makes an equal appeal to every believer; the voice of the Spirit attests to each of us the divine quality of some books more clearly than others. If we were to be quite honest, probably all of us would confess that there are some books that we read infrequently, and others perhaps not at all, while of some we never tire. We might even say that

we had received more spiritual profit and edification in Christian character from the " Pilgrim's Progress " or the " The Imitation of Christ " than from the Epistle of Jude, if we were quite candid and outspoken. Luther, who was given to strong statements, said that if a man had the fourth Gospel and Romans, with First Peter and First John, it would not matter if he had no other book of the New Testament. We each have our list, different from Luther's, perhaps no two exactly agreeing, of favorite books. Those are our private Canon. For our real Canon is what we know and rightly appreciate of the New Testament, and a good many who pride themselves on their orthodox views regarding the Scriptures could carry their real Canon in their vest pockets and still have ample room for a watch or a roll of greenbacks.

XI

CONCLUSION

XI

OUR investigation is completed. The reader has in his possession all the material facts relating to the history of the Canon, together with the inferences that may be rationally drawn from them. He has been able to test for himself rigorously every proposed inference, and he may, if he choose, verify the accuracy of every statement of fact. It remains only to summarize, briefly and clearly, the steps in the process and the conclusions reached.

1. Our point of departure is the existence among the Jews, at the beginning of the Christian era, of the synagogue worship and the idea of a Canon of Scripture. That this Canon may not have been absolutely fixed, or that their ideas about it may not have been accepted by Christians, without some modification, are matters of detail that in no wise affect the material fact. The law and the prophets were read every Sabbath in every synagogue, and were accepted as Scriptures of divine origin and authority.

2. It was to Jews, with such training and hav-

ing such ideas, that the gospel was first preached, and it was of such Jews that the first Christian churches were largely composed. In their assemblies as Christians they naturally continued their Jewish customs—the law and the prophets were continually read. At the same time an oral gospel was as continually proclaimed. To the Christian believer the words of the Lord Jesus were of supreme authority, and the Jewish Scriptures were valued largely because they testified of him. That this conception of relative authority everywhere prevailed, nobody can doubt who has read attentively the New Testament documents. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life. He speaks "as one having authority, and not as their scribes." In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom. And not Paul only, but all the apostles, made continual use of the method that Philip pursued with the eunuch, when "beginning from this Scripture," the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, "he preached unto him Jesus." The preaching of Peter as recorded in the Acts, and the same apostle's use of the Old Testament in his writings, the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all follow the same principle. To the apostles the significance of the Old Testament was that it

everywhere confirmed their contention that Jesus was the Messiah.

3. The apostles were the living embodiment of the teachings of Jesus, witnesses of his resurrection, and proclaimers of the truth he had taught. Therefore, when they began to write letters to the churches, their words were received as the words of the Lord. Paul, at least, did not hesitate to claim that he wrote under the direction of the Spirit of Christ. It would necessarily follow that such letters would be jealously preserved, as a treasure beyond price, by the churches to which they were sent.

4. But these letters were written to be read publicly at the meetings of the churches. Some of them were addressed to groups of churches, each of which would certainly keep a copy. They would be read, not once or twice, but many times. Gradually there would be interchange of copies, and a growing desire in each church to have as complete a collection as possible. In this way, a collection of Paul's Epistles was probably in existence in the churches, both East and West, by the beginning of the second century, for Ignatius and Polycarp show acquaintance with nearly every one of them, even if they do not formally

quote from them. Even Clement and the Didache, in the last decade of the first century, show almost as extensive knowledge of them.

5. The Gospels do not seem to have been written for public reading, but rather for private use. But the authority always attributed to the words of Jesus would naturally lead to their being read in the churches almost as soon as they were published. The same tendency that led to the making of collections of Paul's Epistles would lead the churches to make collections of the Gospels. In Justin's time we have the first mention of the public reading of the Gospels, and he mentions it as an established custom, for the growth of which we must allow a full generation. This carries back the collection and reading of the Gospels to the first quarter of the second century, and it may well have begun considerably earlier.

6. Only one hypothesis can explain this action of the churches. They would never have troubled themselves to preserve and collect, they would never have publicly read in their assemblies for worship, writings that they did not believe to be of divine origin and to possess divine authority. This belief was so much a matter of course with them that it never occurred to them to assert it

in so many words. It is the tacit assumption that underlies all the citations of the earliest Fathers, and gives to such citations their whole significance. The rise of the heretical sects in the second century furnished an occasion for the formal assertion of the divine authority of the apostolic writings, and from this time on we find them definitely quoted as Scripture. They were now appealed to as the decisive confirmation of truth and the decisive condemnation of error.

7. Heresy also hastened the decision of the churches concerning the books that should be regarded as Scripture. Up to this time there had been collections, but no collection. That is to say, definite ideas regarding the exact limits of the Canon cannot be discovered until the latter decades of the second century. Many books were now in circulation, claiming apostolic origin and authority. Some of these were read in all the churches, some were read in most of the churches, some were read in comparatively few churches. By his rejection of all books save the Epistles of Paul and the Gospel of Luke, and these in a form more or less incomplete and mutilated, Marcion compelled the Catholic churches to define their latent ideas about the Scriptures, assert the

authority of some of the books that he had rejected, and decide whether others also should be accepted. The insistence by the Montanists on the continuous gift of inspiration and prophecy led the Church to emphasize the final authority of the apostolic writings as a rule of faith. The question of the Canon would have forced itself on the Church sooner or later, if there had been no heresy, but heresy insured its consideration sooner.

8. In the last quarter of the second century we begin to find evidence of a definite decision of this question. In the Muratorian Canon and in the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian, we discover tolerably clear proof of the universal acceptance as Scripture of twenty books that claim apostolic origin and authority—the so-called Provisional Canon—consisting of the four Gospels, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the Acts, First John and First Peter. At the same time, there are many other books that have an acceptance more or less wide—the remaining seven of our present Canon, and an undefined number of others, of which the most prominent are the Epistles of Clement, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd.

9. About this time also we can trace in the East

the making of a collection of epistles supplementary to the Pauline, which came to be known as the Catholic Epistles. Alexandria was the center of this process, which was definitely completed before the close of the second century. The Epistle to the Hebrews was also definitely accepted there, not at first as Pauline, but as "apostolic," that is, coming from some one of the immediate followers and companions of the apostles. Gradually the tradition of a Pauline authorship prevailed in the East. In the West, on the contrary, where in the Epistle of Clement we have the earliest attestation of Hebrews, the tradition of a non-Pauline authorship lingered to the very last, being revived even during the Middle Ages, and caused this to be the last book accepted.

10. A similar doubt concerning the Apocalypse lingered in the East, while the West gave it a fairly early acceptance in the second century. This Eastern opposition to this book was as slowly overcome as was the Western to Hebrews, and a small part of the Eastern Church never did accept the Apocalypse, as is shown by its absence from the Syrian and Egyptian versions. Even in the West, the book was generally placed last in the MSS and versions.

11. No one church or region had a predominant influence in the formation of the Canon. While the Canon was the result of the influence and experience of the whole Church, if any one region was more potent than another it was Alexandria, which bred great scholars and bishops in the centuries when Rome failed to produce a single man above mediocrity. It would be unhistorical to say that Alexandria made the Canon, precisely as it is unhistorical to say that Rome made it—with this difference, however, that enough evidence is producible to make the former proposition seem plausible to the untrained in historical research, while for the latter statement not one smallest tittle of proof can be found in the whole range of patristic literature. Of the seven books finally added to the twenty of the Provisional Canon, six are definitely due to the initiative and influence of Alexandria. It was her insistence on Hebrews that finally overcame the doubts of the West. It was the acceptance of the "seven Catholic Epistles" at Alexandria, from the time of Clement, that at length induced the West to accept James, Jude, Second and Third John, and above all Second Peter. In one point only was the West more potent than the East, in

securing the addition to the Canon of the Apocalypse. If Alexandria had been left utterly to herself, the Canon would probably have lacked that book. We cannot, however, trace any direct agency of the Church of Rome in adding to the Canon a book that Luther called a "dumb prophecy," that Zwingli said "is not a book of the Canon," that Calvin omitted altogether from his commentaries.

12. At the end of the fourth century we find a virtually complete agreement of the churches, East and West, regarding the Canon. Athanasius and Cyril of Jerusalem for the East, Augustine and Jerome for the West, speak with one voice, and the books of which all testify as those received in the churches are the books of our present Canon. The first of them to speak is Athanasius, so that the earliest list of canonical books that exactly agrees with our own is Alexandrine and belongs to the year 367. No bishop of the Roman Church is reported to have made any utterance on the Canon before Innocent I, 416. And yet we are gravely assured that our Canon is Roman, and that if Alexandria had had the making of it, we should have a very different Canon! The conclusion warranted by the

facts would appear to be this: of all the Patriarchal churches, Rome had the least influence in the formation of the Canon.

13. This unanimity in the Church was not produced by ecclesiastical authority. In the early stages of the process there is little evidence of episcopal interference, no evidence of episcopal predominance. The bishops, we are entitled to conclude, had the same influence in the matter of the Canon that they had in the settlement of all ecclesiastical questions, and no more. The decision of the Church was usually expressed through its official head, the bishop, but it was always necessary that his decision should be approved by at least a majority of the whole Church. If episcopal agency in the formation of the Canon were much more in evidence than it actually is, we should still be compelled to view this agency as only the orderly way in which the inward conviction of the whole Church found formal expression. In the first four centuries, we know that episcopal power was no despotism. Even had each bishop been a despot, there was no concert of action, and the problem of accounting for the ultimate unanimity of the decision would be little helped toward solution by accepting

a hypothesis of episcopal omnipotence. Nor was there any conciliar action, save the doubly doubtful case of Laodicea, preceding the attainment of unanimity. The synod of Carthage assumes the existence of certain "canonical" books, catalogues them, and declares that no others shall be read in the churches. Popes and councils only confirm the Canon already accepted with virtual unanimity. So far as the New Testament is concerned, that is true even of the Council of Trent.

14. This tracing of the historic evolution of the Canon provides no basis for its acceptance by a Protestant. It is a historical fact that we actually receive our New Testament Canon from the Catholic Church of the first four centuries. But we do not continue to hold the Canon because the Catholic Church formed it, for the *dicta* of that Church have no authority for us. We hold the Canon because the same considerations that led the Catholic Church to make this Canon are still powerful to convince us that these books and no others should be received as the word of God. And yet we cannot conclude, with Westcott and others, that the history of the Canon proves the Church to have been guided in its selection of books by the Holy Spirit. There is

no rational justification for such a conclusion, save to a Catholic. For there was equal unanimity in the development of a hierarchy, of an elaborate system of ritual, of the doctrine of sacramental grace—of all, in a word, that was Catholic, as opposed to Protestant and evangelical. Shall we conclude that the Spirit of God directed these developments also? Rome unhesitatingly answers, Yes. But can we answer, Yes? And if not, by what criterion may we decide that unanimity regarding the Canon proves the guidance of the Spirit of God, while unanimity in the development of a hierarchy proves nothing of the sort?

15. The Reformers first stated the true basis on which the authority of the Canon rests: the perception by the believer, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, that there is a divine quality, and hence a divine authority, in the books of the Canon. The question used to be whether there was any human element in the Scriptures; the question now is, whether there is anything divine in them. And not all the Fathers and not all the Councils that the Church has ever known can give to the longing heart such assurance of the divine origin and divine authority of the New

Testament as the book itself gives to one who has been born again of the Spirit of God. One does not more certainly recognize the voice of his friend, calling to him out of the dark, than a child of God knows his Father's voice when he reads his word. The Holy Spirit in the believer's heart confirms what the same Holy Spirit has guided apostles and others to write. Like all other perceptions, this is an ultimate fact, that can neither be analyzed nor proved, but must be experienced. He who has experienced it can never doubt either its reality or its truth. This perception may be clearer in some believers than in others; it may be clearer in regard to some books than with others. But the general consensus of experience throughout Christendom, and that not for a single generation, but for age after age, ought to be considered decisive regarding the quality of a book.

16. It was this perception of a divine quality in a book that gave it place in the Canon in the first instance, and has kept it there permanently. The voice of a majority of churches in some region, or for a limited time, may have placed a book in the Canon that ultimately failed to make good its title to canonicity. Such was the case, for ex-

ample, with the Shepherd. On the other hand, the voice of a majority of churches in some region, or for a limited time, may have excluded from the Canon a book that ultimately was able to make good its claim to canonicity. Such was the case with the Apocalypse. The decisive factor, in the long run, in the case of every book that claimed to be Scripture was the consensus of Christian experience in the whole Church, and for more than a single generation, that it possessed an exceptional divine quality, which fitted it "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."

17. Therefore, and finally, the Canon of the New Testament was not "closed" by ecclesiastical authority. The phrase "closed Canon" is not a locution or idea of the Fathers, but of modern writers. It were rash to assert that in the vast range of patristic literature anything has never been said, but the learned writers who have been delving into the Fathers for years have not found and cited a single passage where a Father speaks of a "closed" Canon. The Canon never was closed, except in the sense that a time came when production ceased of books that the Christian consciousness recognized as belonging in the

same class with those that constitute the Canon. At first some thought there were other books of the same quality and value, and they were read in the churches and cited as Scripture; then men began to doubt, and they were believed to be edifying books, but not canonical; long since they ceased even to edify.

If there was ever a book, or collection of books, that could be accurately described as the survival of the fittest, then the New Testament is such a book. And yet this gradual process of testing and winnowing, extending over a period of three centuries, has been called an "arbitrary selection." If there is any phrase in our language that would be less true to the historic fact, one would be glad to know what it is. Jülicher is little inclined to any opinion that is orthodox or traditional, but on this point he says: "A gradual process made the books of the New Testament the most sacred writings of Christendom. They did not attain this position immediately upon their completion; but it would be equally untrue to suppose that on a given day the decision of a majority in the synod transformed them from ordinary books into divine records. The New Testament Canon is the result of a long-continued process,

the first phases of which we have to reconstruct by hypothesis, since direct testimony from such distant antiquity is not forthcoming. One thing is certain: before a book was canonized it must have been tenderly and highly prized. And moreover, this love and high esteem must have been very widely spread if canonization not only aroused no opposition, but was nowhere considered as an innovation." [1]

And where is the man who will now allege—and prove—that this consensus of the Christian experience of nineteen centuries has made any serious error? Of the books that were finally dropped from the Canon, is there one that any sober man of any serious scholarly attainments or recognized literary taste or spiritual discernment, would have restored? Not the Shepherd, surely, with its continual smirk of sex-consciousness and its silly allegorical twaddle. Hardly the Epistle of Clement, for an age that stumbles over the Gadarene pigs would fall down altogether if asked to believe the fable of the phœnix. Commentators to-day find it hard enough to accept some of Paul's Old Testament exegesis; what would they do if they must accept and justify the

[1] Introduction, p. 476.

utter absurdities of the Epistle of Barnabas? And these are confessedly the best of the *Notha* of Eusebius; if these cannot make a valid claim to canonicity, no other Christian writing of antiquity can.

On the other hand, what book is there in our present Canon for the exclusion of which convincing reasons can be given? Not reasons that might convince here and there a Christian, but reasons that would or should convince the church at large? It is true that we do not all agree in our estimate of the relative value of the canonical books. For myself, the Epistle of Jude and Second and Third John weigh little. My perception of any divine quality in them is weak, if not entirely lacking. I do not derive any considerable amount of spiritual instruction or comfort from them. Probably many readers could make a similar confession, naming other books, possibly, than these. But I would not, therefore, vote to remove these books from the Canon, for, unlike Luther, I do not regard my perceptions and my limited experience as the norm for all others. If the books in question do not fully approve themselves to me as divine, it is just possible that the defect may be in the dulness of my spirit-

ual apprehension, not in the books. They have approved themselves to multitudes of other Christians. All of us are wiser than any one of us. Wherefore, I am sorry that I cannot find in these books what others have found there, and am convinced that such humility is good for me, and should be cultivated, rather than the arrogance of spirit that would reject as worthless to anybody that which I do not find worthful to myself.

The objection may be made to this interpretation of the formation of the Canon—and that it is interpretation, as well as history, is admitted: any treatment of the formation of the Canon must be both—that it leaves too much to subjective impressions. The phrases "Christian consciousness" and "Christian experience" connote ideas that are distrusted by many Christians, and "consensus" is also a word of suspicious vagueness, as it seems to many. Any test that is subjective is thought to be so far uncertain. And if this interpretation answers some questions, it suggests others: If the consensus of Christian experience has settled the Canon, does it not logically follow that a different consensus of Christian experience might unsettle it? If books became canonical because all Christians perceived in them a divine

quality, does it not follow that if all Christians should cease to perceive any divine quality in a book, it must be dropped from the Canon? And if these things are fairly implied in the above theory of the Canon, are we not left with a very uncertain foundation for our Christian faith?

It may be confidently affirmed that, the longer and the more carefully the whole subject is considered, the less serious this objection will seem to anybody, while for most Christians it will vanish altogether.

In the first place, the true foundation of a Christian's faith is not a book, but a person. Not the New Testament, but Jesus Christ, is the corner-stone upon which we are built. Every Christian ought to settle that point first of all, and, with Paul, know whom (not what) he has believed. Jesus himself wrote nothing. If all his apostles had done likewise, and several generations had passed before the oral gospel was reduced to writing, we should still have had enough knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus to make men believers in him. That we should be vastly poorer than we are, without the New Testament, is true; that Christianity would have been bankrupt without its apostolic writings, is un-

thinkable. There would still be a Christ of history, as well as a Christ of faith, if there had never been a New Testament. No man has his faith resting on a sure foundation, until he not merely assents to this, but fully realizes it.

Secondly, the Canon must be justified either by external or by internal authority. It is not possible to justify it on the basis of external authority. Catholics can accept the word of the Church that these books and no others are canonical, but not so Protestants. The word of the Church is worthless to us, save in the way of ordinary historic testimony. And apostolic authority, in which some of us would take refuge, is equally unavailing for the justification of our Canon as it exists. A canon might be constructed, for which apostolic authority might be claimed, but it would not be our Canon. Four books, at least, of the present Canon were written by men who were not apostles: the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Acts, and Hebrews. Nor can we be sure that the writers of these books did their work under apostolic sanction and authority. Even the traditions of the second and third centuries that try to establish a constructive "apostolic" character for these books, do not assert that Mark and Luke wrote with

the actual knowledge of Peter and Paul, or that their writings were seen and approved by these apostles. Besides these, the first Gospel, in its present form, can no longer be maintained to be Matthew's, save in the sense that it embodies an earlier work on the discourses of our Lord, written in Aramaic by Matthew. Who wrote the book in its present form we have not the slightest information. Not to dwell on the weak attestation of Second Peter as the work of that apostle, it is perfectly plain that if apostolicity, in any real sense, be made the test of canonicity our Canon is hopelessly discredited.

Thirdly, the subjective test is not " dangerous." On the contrary, it is the only safe criterion of canonicity. There is no valid *a priori* objection to be urged against post-apostolic inspiration or post-apostolic miracle; any objection that may be urged to either on *a priori* grounds will be found to be equally valid against all inspiration and all miracle. Huxley has conceded, in behalf of modern science, that the whole question of inspiration and miracle is not a question of assumptions, pro or con, but a question of fact, to be decided by evidence. And the only convincing evidence for the inspiration of any book is the

character of the book, the appeal that it makes directly to the spiritually minded reader. The assertion of Paul that he writes to the church at Corinth under the direct impulse of the Spirit could never convince anybody that he really was inspired, if the message that he delivered did not vouch for itself to the reader's soul as coming from the same Spirit that had made him a new creation. For anybody can assert inspiration. Emanuel Swedenborg said that he was inspired, but he was undoubtedly deluded. Joseph Smith said that he was inspired, but he was undoubtedly an impostor. We could not be sure that Paul was neither an enthusiast (as some still claim) nor an impostor, but for the quality that we perceive, by the aid of the Spirit of God, in his writings. The Spirit in the believer's heart bears witness thus with the Spirit speaking through apostles and prophets in the past, and the witness is one. That and nothing else works conviction in us that the books of the Canon are God's word.

Fourthly, no Christian need shrink from any logical implication of this test. If there were any other book in existence that could produce the same universal conviction of its divine quality that has been produced on the whole Christian

world for nineteen centuries by the canonical books, it ought to be in the Canon. And it would be—nothing could keep it out. But there is no such book; there never has been; we may be confident there never will be. Even the "Pilgrim's Progress" which every Protestant would place next to Scripture, and "The Imitation of Christ," which every Catholic and some Protestants would give a similar place, are only "next." Nobody has ever ranked either on the same plane with the New Testament. On the other hand, should the time ever come when the whole Christian world, for successive generations, becomes convinced that any book now in the Canon is utterly lacking in divine quality and absolutely unfitted to instruct or comfort the saints, how could such a book be kept in the Canon? But what supposition about the future could be more wildly improbable than that there will ever be such a complete reversal of judgment about any canonical book? In a word, then, the objections suggested by these logical implications of the subjective test are purely academic. They have no practical force, because they apply to nothing that has had place in the history of Christianity, or that rational conjecture can suggest for its

future. If the test is no more "dangerous" than this, we can afford to smile at the danger.

Fifthly, after all, whatever objections, theoretical or practical, may be made to this subjective test, it *is* the test applied to the New Testament by every Christian. Unless a book manifests to us its divine quality, we do not receive it as Scripture. We do not, because we cannot. Whatever we publicly profess to believe about the New Testament, only those books are Scripture to our hearts that our hearts recognize as such. Why not frankly admit this, then, and avow that since this subjective test is decisive of real canonicity for each of us, it is the true test of formal canonicity for all of us? It is always safe to tell the truth.

And in making this avowal we may be as certain as we are of our own existence of this: the New Testament will never lose its hold upon men's hearts, because to the end of time it will speak of Him who came from heaven to give life to men, and that they might have it abundantly. While there remains on the earth one soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, he will eagerly seek the words of him who spake as never man spake, that he may be filled.

Nevertheless, there are some who will not be able to accept this theory until they are fully assured that it is orthodox. I have set it forth in this book because I believe it to be something better than orthodox—because I believe it to be true. But it is, in fact, *the* orthodoxy regarding the Canon. Is anybody more orthodox than John Calvin? It has already been shown at length that this is the doctrine of his "Institutes." Does anybody fear to accept as sufficiently orthodox the teaching of the Philadelphia Confession? Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter in the words of that venerable document:

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all the glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; YET, NOTWITHSTANDING, OUR FULL PERSUASION AND ASSURANCE OF THE INFALLIBLE TRUTH, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY THEREOF, IS FROM THE INWARD WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BEARING WITNESS BY AND WITH THE WORD IN OUR HEARTS.

APPENDIX

I

THE MURATORIAN FRAGMENT

Translated from the emended text in Westcott's "History of the Canon," pp. 543-547.

. . . in which things nevertheless he was present, and so[1] he placed them. The third book of the Gospel, the one according to Luke, that physician A. D. 180 (?) wrote in his own name, as it seemed good to him, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had associated him with himself as an assistant studious of the law—nevertheless he did not see the Lord in the flesh—and accomplished the same as he was able. So also John, one of the disciples, [author of the] fourth of the Gospels, began to write from the birth of John [the Baptist]. At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and bishops, he said, "Fast with me for three days from this, and whatever shall be revealed to us, let us narrate it to each other." On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, while all revised them. And so, while different ideas are taught in the various books of the Gospels, yet there is no difference in the faith of believers, since in all everything is declared by one superintending Spirit, concerning the birth, passion, resurrection, conversation with his disciples, and his

[1] The meaning probably is that Mark arranged the material of his Gospel in the order indicated by Peter, who was participant in the events narrated.

twofold advent: the first in the humiliation of contempt, which is past; the second in the glory of royal power, which is to come. What wonder then that John so continually brings forward phrases, even in his epistles, saying in his own person, "What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and handled with our hands—these things have we written." For he thus professes that he was not only an eye-witness but also a hearer, and besides a writer in their order of all the wonderful works of the Lord. Moreover, the Acts of all the apostles were written in one book. Luke narrated [this] to the most excellent Theophilus, because the various events took place in his presence, as he shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter and the journey of Paul, when he went from the city [of Rome] to Spain.[1] Then as to the Epistles of Paul, they themselves declare to those who are willing to understand, from what place and for what reason they were sent. First of all he wrote to the Corinthians, to check heretical schism; then to the Galatians, forbidding circumcision; then at greater length to the Romans, on the rule of the Scriptures,[2] and also to show that Christ is the Head of these, which it is needful for us to discuss in detail.[3] For the blessed Apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor, John, wrote by name to seven churches only: first to the Corinthians, second to the Ephesians, third to the Philippians, fourth to the Colossians, fifth to the Galatians, sixth to the Thessalonians, seventh to the Romans. Moreover, though he wrote a second time to the Corinthians and Thessalonians for their correction, it is nevertheless

[1] The text is hopelessly corrupt here, and only by heroic emendation can any sense whatever be extracted from it. The above is the probable meaning.

[2] We are to understand the Old Testament here.

[3] In the treatise of which this is a fragment.

shown that one church is spread abroad through the whole world, And John too, in the Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to all. Besides [he wrote] one [letter] to Philemon, and one to Titus, and two [letters] to Timothy, from affection and love; which are nevertheless[1] hallowed in the esteem of the Catholic Church and in the ordering of ecclesiastical discipline. There are also in circulation a letter to the Laodiceans, another to the Alexandrines, forged under Paul's name against the heresy of Marcion; and several others that cannot be received into the Catholic Church, for it is not fitting to mix gall with honey. The Epistle of Jude, however, and two of the above-named John, are received in the Catholic [Church];[2] and the Book of Wisdom, written by the friends of Solomon in his honor. We receive also the Apocalypses of John and Peter, although some among us are unwilling to have [the latter][3] read in the Church. The Shepherd, moreover, Hermas very recently wrote in the city of Rome, in our own times, while his brother Pius was occupying the chair of the Roman Church, and so it is fitting that it should be read, indeed, but not publicly in church, neither among the prophets, whose number is complete, nor among the apostles to the end of time. But we receive nothing at all of the writings of Arsinous, or of Valentinus, or of Miltiades. Those also who wrote the new book of Psalms for Marcion, together with Basilides, founder of the Asiatic Cataphrygians. . .

[1] The idea probably is: in spite of their being addressed merely to individuals, they have been received as Scripture by the Church.

[2] Or, the meaning may be, "among the catholic epistles."

[3] This is the translation favored by most, though the text would better bear the rendering: "to have [them] read," thus making both Apocalypses doubtful.

II

THE CANON OF EUSEBIUS

From his "Ecclesiastical History," bk. iii., chap. 25. 2PNF I : 155.

A. D. 324

Since we are dealing with this subject, it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament that have already been mentioned. First then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels; following them the Acts of the Apostles. After this must be reckoned the Epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former Epistle of John and likewise the Epistle of Peter, must be maintained. After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings (*Homologoumena*). Among the disputed writings (*Antilegomena*) which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called Epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second Epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name. Among the rejected writings (*Notha*) must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant Epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books. And among these some have placed also the Gospel ac-

cording to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books. But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of those also, distinguishing these works which, according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet known to ecclesiastical writers—we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any other besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but all of them are to be cast aside as absurd and impious.

III

THE CANON OF CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

From his "Catechetical Lectures." 2PNF VII : 27, 28.

Then of the New Testament there are the four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are mis-
A. D. 350 chievous. The Manichæans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tinctured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort. Receive also the Acts of the Twelve Apostles; and in addition to these the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; and as a seal upon them all, and the last work of the disciples, the fourteen Epistles of Paul. But let the rest be put aside in a secondary rank. And whatever books are not read in the churches, these read not even by thyself, as thou hast heard me say.

IV

THE CANON OF LAODICEA

2PNF XIV : 158, 159.

Can. 59. No private psalms nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the canoni-
A. D. 363 cal books of the Old and New Testaments. [And these are the books of the New Testament: four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; seven Catholic Epistles; to wit, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude; fourteen Epistles of Paul, one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, one to the Hebrews, two to Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon.]

V.

THE CANON OF ATHANASIUS

From his Festal Letters, No. XXXIX, A. D. 367. Migne, XXVI. 2PNF II : 551 *seq.*

I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the evangelist, saying on my own account: "Forasmuch as some have taken in hand" to reduce into order for themselves the books termed apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the Fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down and accredited as divine; to the end that any one who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led him astray; and that he who has continued stedfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance. A. D. 367

Again, it is not tedious to speak of the [books of the] New Testament. These are, the four Gospels; according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles, and Epistles called Catholic, seven: viz., of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order: the first, to the Romans; then two, to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians;

then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity: that there are other books besides these, not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness: the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.

VI

THE CANON OF THE "APOSTOLIC CANONS"

Compiled in the latter half of the fourth century. Text from ANF VII : 505.

Can. 85. Let the following books be esteemed venerable and holy by you, both of the clergy and laity. . .

A. D. 375 (?) Our sacred books, that is, those of the New Covenant, are these: the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the fourteen Epistles of Paul; two Epistles of Peter; three of

John; one of James, one of Jude; two Epistles of Clement; and the Constitutions dedicated to you, the bishops, by me, Clement, in eight books; which it is not fit to publish before all, because of the mysteries contained in them; and the Acts of us, the Apostles.

VII

THE CANON OF AMPHILOCHIUS

This Canon, ratified by the Trullan Council, is in iambic verse; the lines, but not the rhythm, of the original are preserved. From Migne, Patrol. Gr. XXXVII : 1593.

A. D. 380

Name to me now the books of the New Testament:
Receive only four Gospels,
Matthew, then Mark, to which Luke
Being added numbers three, and John, in time
Fourth, but first in height of doctrine;
For having known this son of thunder I call
Him greatest in sounding the word of God.
And receive also the second book of Luke,
The general Acts of the Apostles,
Add next the vessel of honor,
The preacher of the Gentiles, the apostle
Paul, writing wisely to the churches
Fourteen letters. . .
Some say that to the Hebrews is spurious,
Not speaking wisely, for the grace is genuine.

See, what remains? of the Catholic Epistles
Some say there are seven, while only three
Should be received, say others: James one,
One of Peter and one of John; but some
Three of his, and besides these two
Of Peter receive, and Jude the seventh.
The Apocalypse of John again
Some approve, but the most
Say it is spurious.

VIII

THE CANON OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN

This is from the Father's Poems, and is in iambic verse, like the preceding. From Migne, Patrol. Gr. XXXVIII : 842.

A. D. 391

But now number also the new Mystery:
Matthew indeed wrote for the Hebrews the wonderful works of Christ,
And Mark for Italy, Luke for Greece,
John, the great preacher, for all, walking in heaven.
Then the acts of the wise apostles,
And fourteen Epistles of Paul,
And seven Catholic [Epistles], of which James is one,
Two of Peter, three of John again.
Jude is the seventh. You have all.
If there is any beyond these, it is not among the genuine.

IX

THE CANON OF JEROME

From Letter LIII, *Ad Paulinum.* 2PNF VI : 101, 102.

The New Testament I will briefly deal with. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the Lord's team of four, the true cherubim or store of knowledge. . . The Apostle Paul writes to seven churches (for the eighth epistle—that to the Hebrews—is not generally counted in with the others). He instructs Timothy and Titus; he intercedes with Philemon for his runaway slave. Of him I think it better to say nothing than to write inadequately. The Acts of the Apostles seem to relate a mere unvarnished narrative descriptive of the infancy of the newly born church; but when we once realize that their author is Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel, we shall see that all his words are medicine for the sick soul. The apostles, James, Peter, John, and Jude, have published seven epistles at once spiritual and to the point, short and long, short that is in words but lengthy in substance, so that there are few indeed who do not find themselves in the dark when they read them. The Apocalypse of John has as many mysteries as words. In saying this I have said less than the book deserves. All praise of it is inadequate; manifold meanings lie hid in its every word.

A. D. 394

X

THE CANON OF CARTHAGE

Mansi, III. 891. 2PNF XIV : 453, 454.

Can. 39. Besides the canonical Scriptures, nothing shall be read in church under the name of divine Scripture. But the canonical Scriptures are as follows. . . The New Testament: the Gospels, four books; the Acts of the Apostles, one book; the Epistles of Paul, fourteen; the Epistles of Peter the apostle, two; the Epistles of John the apostle, three; the Epistle of James the apostle, one; the Epistle of Jude the apostle, one; the Revelation of John, one book. Let this be sent to our brother and fellow-bishop, Boniface [of Rome], and to the other bishops of those parts, that they may confirm this canon, for these are the things that we have received from our fathers to be read in church.

XI

THE CANON OF AUGUSTINE

From his treatise "On Christian Doctrine," bk. ii., chap. 8. PNF II : 538.

Now the whole Canon of Scripture on which we say this judgment is to be exercised, is contained in the following books [we omit his catalogue of forty-four books of the Old Testament]. . . That of the New Testament, again, is contained within the following: four books of the Gospel,

A. D. 397

according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John; fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul—one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, one to the Colossians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two of Peter, three of John; one of Jude; and one of James; one book of the Acts of the Apostles; and one of the Revelation of John.

XII

THE CANON OF RUFINUS

From his Commentary on the Apostles' Creed, 2PNF III : 558.

Of the New [Testament] there are four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke; fourteen A. D. 398 (?) Epistles of the Apostle Paul, two of the Apostle Peter, one of James, brother of the Lord and apostle, one of Jude, three of John, the Revelation of John. These are the books that the Fathers have comprised within the Canon, and from which they would have us deduce the proofs of our faith.

But it should be known that there are also other books which our fathers call not "canonical" but "ecclesiastical" . . . in the New Testament, the little book that is called the book of the Pastor of Hermas, [and that] which is called the Two Ways, or the Judgment of Peter; all of which they would have read in the churches, but not appealed to for the confirmation of doctrine. The other writings they have named Apocrypha. These they would not have read in the churches.

XIII

LIST OF THE CODEX ALEXANDRINUS

The New Testament.

A. D. 400 (?)

Gospels, four.
According to Matthew.
According to Mark.
According to Luke.
According to John.
Acts of the Apostles.
Catholic Epistles, seven.
Epistles of Paul, fourteen.
Apocalypse of John.
First Epistle of Clement.
Second Epistle of Clement.

XIV

THE CANON OF POPE INNOCENT I

Translated from the Latin text in Westcott, p. 582.

The New Testament: Four books of the Gospels; fourteen Epistles of Paul; three Epistles of John; two Epistles of Peter; the Epistle of Jude; the Epistle of James; the Acts of the Apostles; the Apocalypse of John. But the rest, either under the name of Matthias, or of James the Less, or

A. D. 405

under the name of Peter and John, which were written by a certain Leucius, or under the name of Andrew, which were written by the philosophers Nexocharidis and Leonidas, or under the name of Thomas, and any others there may be, you know should not only be repudiated but also condemned.

XV

THE CANON OF POPE GELASIUS

Translated from the Latin text in Westcott, p. 584.

A. D. 496 (?)

Likewise the order of the Scriptures of the New Testament, which the Holy Roman Catholic Church receives and venerates: Four books of the Gospels; that is, Matthew, one book; Mark, one book; Luke, one book; John, one book. Likewise the Acts of the Apostles, one book. The Epistles of Paul, in number fourteen; the Apocalypse, one book; Apostolic Epistles, in number seven; of Peter the apostle, in number two; of James the apostle, in number one; of John the apostle, in number three; of Jude the Zealot, [in number one].

XVI

THE RATIFICATION OF THE TRULLAN COUNCIL

Held as the Seventh Ecumenical Council, but repudiated in the West. Text from 2PNF XIV: 361.

Canon ii. It has also seemed good to this holy Council, that the eighty-five canons, received and ratified by the holy and blessed Fathers before us, and also handed down in the name of the holy and glorious apostles, should from this time forth remain firm and unshaken for the cure of souls and the healing of disorders. . . We set our seal likewise upon all the other holy canons set forth by our blessed Fathers, that is . . . those too at Laodicea. . . Likewise too the canons [*i. e.,* the decretal letters] of . . . Athanasius . . . of Amphilochius of Iconium . . . of Gregory Theologus [Nazianzen].

A. D. 692

XVII

THE CANON OF POPE EUGENIUS IV

From his *Decretum pro Jacobinis;* from Hardouin's Councils, IX. 1023, 1024.

[The Holy Roman Church] most firmly believes, professes, and declares that one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. . . She professes that one and the same God is the author of Old and New Testaments; that is, of the law and prophets, and of the Gospels, since both Testaments were spoken under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, the books of which she received and venerates as contained under the following titles . . . four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; fourteen Epistles of Paul: Romans, two to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews; two of Peter, three of John, James, Jude; the Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse of John.

A. D. 1441

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